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The very first info revealed

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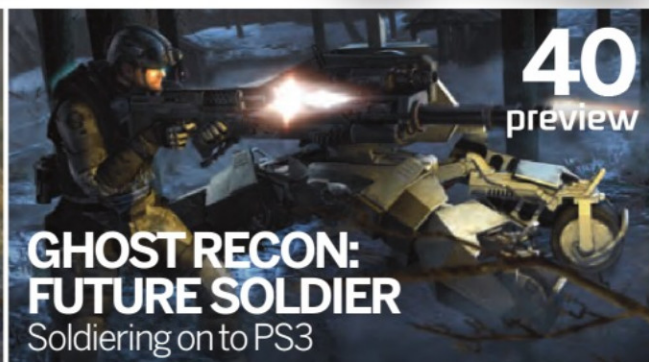


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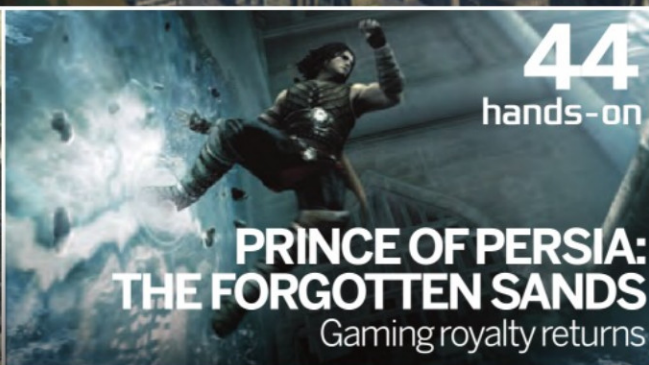
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Welcome PLAY

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

Money for new rope



What a few weeks it's been for PlayStation. *God Of War III*, one of the most anticipated games of recent times, has stormed onto the PS3 and

topped the sales charts, the PSN is notching up impressive user figures and Sony's new motion controller, the PlayStation Move, was revealed. But perhaps the most exciting thing is that this

When it comes to gaming nowadays, what's old is new

isn't unusual now, every month seems to hold a step in PlayStation's evolution, whether it's the introduction of new hardware, the arrival of triple-A games or improvements to the online network. Sony has got the bit between its teeth and is aiming to dominate in every sector of the videogames market: it more than holds its own when it comes to exclusive games, it has an online service that is completely free to use and though time will tell if Move can muscle the Wii out of the market its introduction proves Sony's intent of making the PS3 the one and only

console people have in their homes – because as the slogan goes 'it only does everything.'

With PlayStation undergoing some rejuvenation with the Move, we thought it fitting to take a look at a franchise that is back in a big way this month, *True Crime*. Activision is hoping that its reboot of the classic PlayStation franchise can make a real impact on a new generation of gamers. Allowing us unrestricted access to the studio, it's clear that the team at United Front Games really do mean business

and by drawing on experience gained from making bestselling open-world and driving titles it is looking to offer something rather special when it comes to sandbox crime capers. We also have

news on other franchise revamps in the form of *Medal Of Honor*, *Ghost Recon*, *Street Fighter* and *Castlevania*.

So when it comes to gaming it appears as if what's old is new, but as long as they bring something fresh to the table we're more than happy to welcome them back, a bit older, a bit wiser and much more refined... just like us really.

K. HENNESSEY Editor

contributors



Darran Jones

Darran gave a 20-minute talk about what he does for a living at his nine-year-old daughter's school then, when he'd finished, asked if there were any questions. A little boy put up his hand and asked, "Do you know your flies are undone?" Darran did not know, and would like to apologise for exposing himself to a room full of children in this way.



Simon Miller

Miller loves Metallica, but this month he went to see Diamond Head, who were probably more influential on Metallica than any other band. Through

Diamond Head's entire set, he was able to name each song, which Metallica song was influenced by it and which year each was released. He's like a walking, talking, wrestling Metalli-computer.



Tom Hopkins

This month Tom became a godfather, which we think means he can have us killed if we don't pay him respect, so we'd like to take this opportunity to talk

about how much we respect Tom, both as a co-worker and a friend. We particularly respect his big, pointy ears and the fact that he supports Portsmouth – for the time being anyway.

the PLAY promise

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We will always bring you the most in-depth, impartial, honest reviews and will never bow down to PR or advertising pressure. We have some of the most experienced reviewers in

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PLAY

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NEWS

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

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Play's impressions of Move at GDC



AS YOU CAN see from the following pages we've been rather obsessed with the PlayStation Move this issue, as it has been the driving force behind many arguments and altercations on the

Play team. You can see how we each individually feel about Move opposite and then read our hands-on impressions over the page. We haven't ignored other goings-on in the gaming world, though, as we're sure you would be just as interested in Rockstar's thoughts on its battles against controversy and info on its latest game *LA Noire*. You can find both deeper into this issue's news.

Other highlights include the arrival of an exciting new developer in Sweden built from some of the top talent behind *The Darkness* and *Chronicles Of Riddick*, an extensive interview with *Skate 3* producer Jason DeLong, Tecmo getting to grips with the PSP and a *Half-Minute Hero* competition. Don't say we don't give you good stuff. Lastly Play Investigates returns after a month's break and tackles the tricky waters of the sequel with input from BioWare, DICE, Ubisoft Montreal, 2K Marin and many more. It really is an issue packed full of industry input from around the world.

News Editor, Jonathan Gordon



"A lot of the so-called controversy around our games has come from the mainstream's lack of understanding of our desire to make games for grown-ups" – Rob Nelson, art director, Rockstar San Diego, p 12

It's party time on the PlayStation once again with the advent of Move.



ON THE MOVE

Developers give Play their reactions to the Move

The last month has been dominated by talk of the PlayStation Move, but the development community has been surprisingly quiet. Speaking exclusively to **Play**, representatives of three leading development studios have offered their takes on the Move, what it offers the games industry and whether or not they believe it's going to be successful in the face of the much better established and cheaper Wii. For the most part it would seem that resistance to commentary on Move stems from a degree of scepticism towards the controller, but there is still a great deal of hope that it can shake things up a little.

"I honestly haven't really thought about it too much," Ninja Theory's design chief Tameem Antoniades admitted to us. "We've had Wii and we've got Natal coming and now the PlayStation Move and I really want to see what these things can do, but it doesn't apply to our games so I'm happy to just

Resistance to Move stems from a degree of scepticism towards the controller

wait and see." While at first we were a little surprised by this response it became clear that Antoniades was not alone in his position. "I find them to be just mere gimmicks," Jan-Erik Sjovall, animation director at Ubisoft Montreal told us with regards to motion controllers. "I just don't see how this is going to influence any of the games we're working on right now."

It would appear that the Wii is somewhat responsible for this negative outlook as it has set the tone for things to come from motion control. "What I personally think is that things like

the Wii are the equivalent to Simon Says, Buckaroo or Twister," Antoniades told us. "They're family games that people play together in the living room and Nintendo's always been a toy company. Everybody thinks they are a videogames company, and they are, but they mostly come at it from a toy background. They are extraordinarily successful at that." For him, only hardcore games can prove the viability of Move. "I would be interested to see some games, some hardcore games, prove out the tech," he concluded.

"The biggest criticism of the Wii that I had when it came out was that you had this cool new controller and they were creating games like *Madden* and just retrofitting it for the Wii," Sjovall added. "You have to create unique experiences for these things. In that regard I think that PSN and Xbox Live are the way to go. That's where you'll get the cool games and the experiences where people explore stuff independently."

It's an interesting point and one that's proved true even of the Sixaxis controls already implemented with the PS3. Arguably the first really solid use of these controls was in *Flower* from indie developer thatgamecompany. Such innovators could experiment on small, innovative games at low risk and low cost.

One independent developer we found out is very excited about Move is Blade Interactive, maker of the *World Snooker Championship* series. "Move finally delivers on what we all imagined when Wii was announced way back in 2005, in that it actually tracks movement precisely in 3D space," Blade senior programmer Lee Howarth told us, before going into more specific detail of how Blade could use it. "With Wii MotionPlus we can get the cue angle, and we can use the accelerometers



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Smacking your friends in the head with a hammer has never been better.

to approximate shot power. What Move provides is absolute precision, we can map the exact position of the cue so you can actually see it feather back and forwards accurately, something which isn't possible with the Wii's accelerometers. That means everything from power shots to the lightest taps can be modelled for real rather than approximated."

The example of the snooker game certainly shows us an instance in which a motion controller can offer a new level of interaction that current controllers cannot match and this is something that excites Sjoval, too. "For the last 20 to 30 years we've been using the same controller," he said. "Patrick Redding, the narrative director on *Far Cry 2*, calls it the 'fat pipe, thin pipe' problem. The characters in the world have an almost infinite amount of ways to communicate to you via their facial expressions and hands and the way they talk; they interact somewhat on the screen with you and all you've got is the fricking controller. That's pretty weak and that's the thin pipe. You cannot communicate with the system in an elaborate manner beyond pushing a button. We need to move forward and anything new is a good thing, but whether or not it's the right direction I'm not so sure."

Team Impressions



Keith

I'll reserve judgement until I get hands-on with the device, but going on first impressions I was hoping for something a little more innovative. It appears to be a simple evolution of the Wii-mote with a line-up of games that reflect that... a sports package, mini-game compilation and so on. Hopefully it will come into its own when developers have time to master the functionality. It does, however, give the console more mass appeal and adds to the 'it only does everything' message. More PlayStation 3s in homes has got to be a good thing, even if people are playing the new *Pineapple Dance Studios* game. Oh yes, you know they'll make it.



Gavin

It's good to see Sony showcasing some games that are self-consciously different from the kind of thing we're used to on the Wii. Motion control isn't something I feel I need in my gaming life, but there are signs that it might be capable of enhancing conventional gaming in some way, rather than just tacking novelty value on. Failing that, I'd love to see a new *Bishi Bashi* game with Move controls. Collections of mini-games are the only thing that really works for me with motion control. I don't want the next versions of my favourite franchises to be spoiled by the need to constantly wave my arms. Unless it's *Brütal Legend* and I can use Move to play air guitar.



Ian

In a word: unimpressed. We've seen it all before with the Wii, and Sony's reveal of Move has made a lot of people look forward to Natal more than they were already, so it's misjudged, too. Still, there's potential there and it comes down to developers actually trying to make a game that fits around the control scheme rather than the other way round. Though having said that, it also helps if they make games we actually want to play, and not endless shovelware nonsense like you do see on the Wii. Overall, though, Move will have to prove itself to me.



Jon

I've been impressed by the level of precision that Move offers over the other motion technology being touted, but right now the games are much the same as we've been seeing already. They're all obvious applications of the tech. With the birth of motion control gaming we were told new genres of game would emerge and thus far we haven't seen that. They've all been variations on the party game or on various kinds of arcade shooter. The thing is current pads are perfectly good at these, too. Give Move to some real innovators in the games industry and I'll start getting excited.



YOUR SAY

Will Move be a success?

As much as I hope it will be a success, the one thing I know it needs is proper games that can not only be fun but also give the 'hardcore' gamers a reason to buy one. Considering the new *SOCOM* can use the Move there's no reason why traditional games (FPS, RPG) can't be supported or vice versa, however it works - **rbl007**

Sony has already said they're concerned with the amount of 'shovelware' wheeled out by Nintendo, and have vowed not to make the same mistake. There are already rumours of compatibility with top-class games like *Gran Turismo 5*, but that's the only one mentioned so far. It is essentially a shameless rip-off of the Wii, but so what, they want a piece of the casual gaming pie and it's going to make a lot of money, should they get it right - **the bossman**

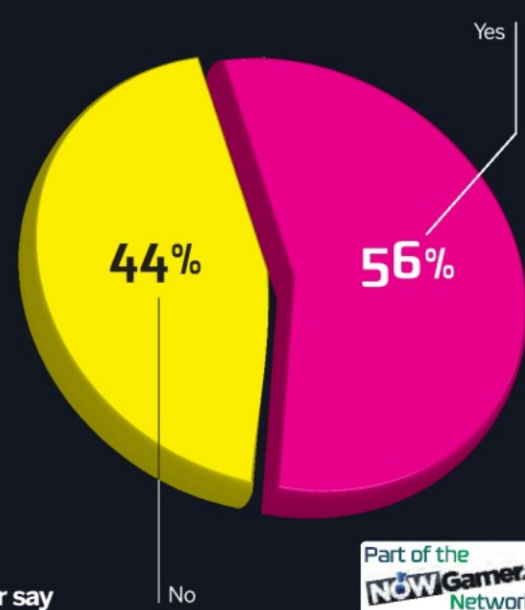
Well, if they want to make a success of this Move, they will have to do exactly what rbl007 said, it needs to be for the 'hardcore' games, they'll make a bit from copying Wii but they need to make something new and exciting for

gamers and it has to be exciting enough that gamers will want to get off their feet and start moving around their hands - **skrudge7**

I don't think it will be a success in the long run. It will be just like the Nintendo Wii where everyone will go out and buy one and then toss it aside once they get bored of the gameplay and lack of good games. I reckon there would be a few good titles for it on launch then it will be cheap family games getting released after - **kev schmit**

I think it will be huge when it first comes out, then everyone will get bored and stop using it. How do I know, you may ask? Well I have a Wii and when I first got it I played on it for eight hours straight and the next morning I couldn't move my arms, now I never play on it, then again, if Move caters for both hardcore and casual audiences it should be great, otherwise, it should just flop - **Talking Yak**

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MOVE FAQs

Everything you need to know about the Move controller setup



MOVE: HANDS-ON VERDICT!

Play gets its hands on Sony's motion controller

Sony can stick as many multicoloured lights on the Move as it wants; the moment you see it in action it's apparent that this is Sony's answer to the Wii MotionPlus. This isn't a bad thing per se, as Nintendo certainly hasn't put the peripheral to particularly good use. The primary Move wand has four action buttons – a Move button, the PS button, Start and Select buttons, and an analogue trigger on the underside. The additional sub-controller isn't required for some Move-enabled games but features the only analogue stick on either motion accessory, making it a necessity for more advanced games like *SOCOM 4*. In other cases, it complements the wand as half of a shield and sword combo, or the arrow being shot from a bow, for example.

Nothing shows off a new peripheral like a sports mini-game collection it seems. The tentatively titled *Sports Champions* is Sony's answer to Nintendo's popular *Wii Sports*, and aside from the obvious jump in graphics, the mini-games are a notch above Team Mario's efforts. Tennis in particular feels more intuitive with the Move. The 1:1 tracking allows you to

pull off any move you want and the game will react accordingly, whereas on the Wii you could be Andre Agassi and still hit the net for no good reason.

Move will be extending to already existing titles, too. Sony's virtual creature simulator *EyePet* initially utilised an *Eye Of Judgment*-esque card system to interact with your little monkey/monster things. An upgraded version out later this year will replace said cards with full Move functionality, and while we found this to negate most issues, with the *EyeToy* improperly registering actions and movements, the implementation of the Move felt frustratingly restricted. Instead of full 3D range, the Move is more like a laser pointer, affixed to a 2D plane. The Move is always behind the creature, never able to go in front of it which feels unnatural and annoying.

Sony was keen to make clear that Move isn't all about casual games. In our time with *SOCOM 4* using the Move, we overcame the learning curve and were soon tackling terrorists with deadly precision. Hardcore players will likely prefer a traditional controller over the Move due to new issues inherent

within the control scheme (such as the tendency to block the screen with your character's

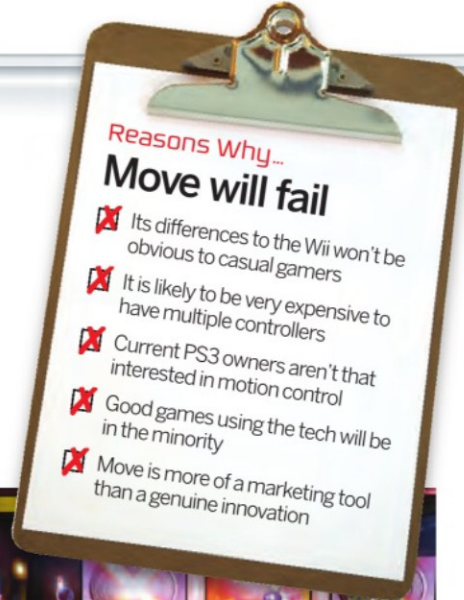
own body by aiming directly ahead). More importantly, however, is that in long sessions, holding the Move is going to wear quickly on non-Olympians, making the peripheral better suited for party games.

The technology is obviously competent but the first batch of games are seemingly being rushed out the door for an autumn release which is a practice that arguably didn't work that well for PlayStation Home. There's no denying that, unlike Project Natal, the Move is essentially a slicker version of the Wii-mote for the PS3. However, we're confident that, in direct opposition to Nintendo, Sony and the third-party developers already signed on to support the Move will do so with vastly superior motion controller experiences, or at least rather better-looking ones.



COMING TO MOVE YOU

The games announced so far for Move



SPORTS CHAMPIONS

Most of what we've seen from this sports compilation are variations on exactly the same game mechanics originally demoed at E3 last year, such as archery and sword fighting. One new element is table tennis.



BRUNSWICK BOWLING

With the success of *Wii Sports* when the Wii launched and the fact that bowling is the most popular game on that compilation, a bowling game for Move is essential. Control simply mimics the real-life motions of bowling.



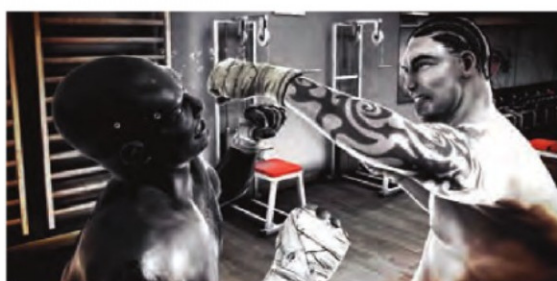
ECCENTRIC SLIDER

This *Pain*-esque action game is the only title Sony Japan is currently working on for Move. You must guide your character sitting on an office chair through a busy city. Tilt the control to move left and right or flick it to jump.



THE SHOOT

This is the first of what is likely to be a long line of on-rail shooters for Move. Fight cowboys, aliens and robots using the Move wand to aim cursors on screen before firing with the trigger.



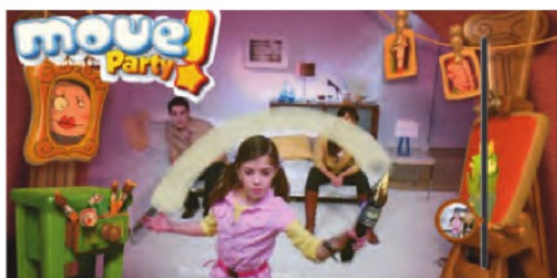
MOTION FIGHTER

This is Sony's take on motion boxing, only its foregone the pugilism of cartoon versions of its players in favour of gritty street fighting. It looks impressive, but opinion at GDC was largely negative or at least indifferent.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 11

This game is coming out before Move, but will have a control setup ready for Move's launch. So, pick this up early and you'll have to settle for standard controls, but by autumn you'll be swinging with Woods, so to speak.



MOVE PARTY

Mini-game compilations are something Sony's had lots of chances to play around with since the EyeToy and this looks like following in the footsteps of those games. Expect plenty of arm swinging and gesture-based hilarity.



TV SUPERSTARS

Using an image of your own face to place on your avatar in-game, this game is another compilation of challenges. The spin here is that you're a contestant in a reality TV show, so expect things to get very weird and competitive.

Can Wii Play?

Wii games we would like to see with Move



WORLD OF GOO

This relatively simple point-and-click puzzle game has done well on PC and WiiWare and would make for a perfect PSN title with Move controls.



OKAMI

Having been released on PS2 to great acclaim, but poor sales, *Okami* felt more intuitive with motion control on Wii. Time to bring it home.



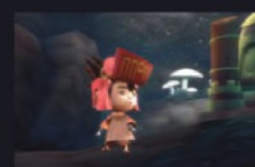
ZAK & WIKI

This Capcom adventure comes in the tradition of games like *Monkey Island*, but mixes in motion-control puzzles and brain teasers.



SIN & PUNISHMENT

Another genre that would make sense with Move is the rail shooter. *Rez HD* would be ideal, but this Treasure-made title would also be welcome.



LOSTWINDS

There's a good reason why this platformer is so well respected among devs as you use motion controls to help Toku navigate each level.



DEAD SPACE: EXTRACTION

A decent lightgun shooter on the Wii and one that would translate perfectly to the Move with HD graphics.



DE BLOB

Mixing a little *Katamari* with some puzzle elements has made *De Blob* a hugely successful Wii title for THQ. A Move spin-off seems likely.



MAD WORLD

Sega's brutal and stylish fighter caused controversy on the Wii, but would be much better suited to the PS3's audience with Move.



ANNO: CREATE A NEW WORLD

You would think there would be more RTS games on Wii, but this is one of the few that have found any success.



EPIC MICKEY

Yet to be released on Wii, but this Warren Spector-devised *Mickey Mouse* game is already generating a lot of interest in the gaming world.

Where Next?

Five genres that could do with the Rockstar treatment



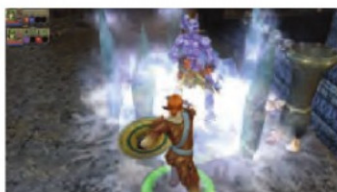
Prisoner Of War Drama

A traditional movie genre, exemplified by *The Great Escape*, that hasn't had much game treatment. It's a genre set in WWII that isn't an FPS. That's the kind of combo we think would intrigue Rockstar and result in a great game.



Roman Epic

This is another classic from the cinema that doesn't get many outings on consoles beyond predictable hack-'n'-slash games. Think *Gladiator* mixed with *GTA* and then be careful that you're not drooling all over this page.



Dungeon Crawler

Rockstar has never shown any great interest in the fantasy realm, but its attention to detail and penchant for more adult material could make for a potent mix. What this genre has lacked most of all is personality.



Dinosaur Survival

Whether it be through the wonders of time travel or the placement of caveman with beast, dinosaurs used to be where all the big scares came from in games. Rockstar's horses in *Red Dead* makes us think it could do well.



Costume Drama

Something set in the 18th/19th Century would be a radical departure. There's been much talk of *Assassin's Creed* heading in this direction, but few games go near this period despite the volatile events of these times.



LEADING THE WAY

Rockstar believes the world is finally coming around to its way of doing things

Speaking exclusively to *Play*, *Red Dead Redemption* art director Rob Nelson has expressed his belief that the controversies that once dogged the publisher/developer are falling behind it as media critics are finally understanding what Rockstar is all about. He also believes that Rockstar will continue to lead the way for the industry in maturing the games industry, revitalising genres and pushing boundaries, but ultimately trusts that the fans will be the final judges of what does or doesn't work.

Red Dead Redemption is a game that does not shy away from showing the brutality of humanity and more specifically the

A Western game may seem like less of a guaranteed hit than a futuristic military FPS

horrors that could occur on the frontier of America at the turn of the 20th Century, but Nelson isn't expecting the kind of backlash *GTA* or *Manhunt* have received previously. "A lot of the so-called controversy around our games has come from the mainstream's lack of understanding of our desire to make games for grown-ups, and thankfully, that seems to have diminished over time as the audience for games with mature themes has caught up with the kind of ideas we've been putting forward from the beginning," he told us. "Controversy is never something we court intentionally – we'd rather let the games speak for themselves."

The influence of Rockstar on the games industry is unquestionable even if its influence on the youth of today may be in question. Nelson seemed proud of Rockstar's legacy in this regard, forging its own path regardless of the current trends. "It's difficult to speculate why other publishers or developers may not explore other genres," he said. "It often takes a very successful game in a given genre before more publishers will see the potential in that genre. As an example, there weren't many open-world games about crime before *Grand Theft Auto*. There weren't a lot of games that explored aspects of hip-hop culture before *San Andreas*. Right now, a Western game might appear like less of a guaranteed hit than a futuristic first-person military shooter, for example, but we have always, as a company, tried to do our own thing and find new things to make games about the things we like."

From its part, Rockstar doesn't seem to give much thought to the controversies it may cause or the way others may attempt to mimic it in the future. It has earned the right to simply do as it pleases and success often seems sure to follow. "The truth is, we make the kind of games we want to play, and we're going to take our games and our stories in directions that feel true to what we're trying to achieve, and thankfully, our fans appreciate us for that," Nelson concluded. "*Red Dead* is very much the next step forward for us in all respects and we believe fans will feel the same way. The game is truly epic in scope, and both very cinematic and very much a game at the same time."

YOUR SAY

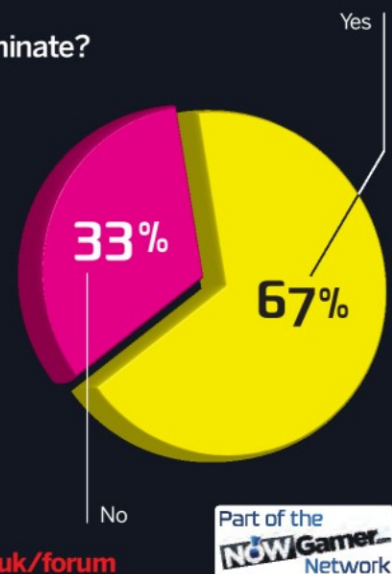
Dominant Force Is the PS3 beginning to dominate?

More and more developers are talking up the PS3 and making it their lead development platform as its user base becomes stronger and game makers realise that sub-standard ports just won't do the job. Sega's *Vanquish*, made by *Resident Evil* creator Shinji Mikami and EA's *Medal Of Honor* reboot are both being developed for PS3 first and if *Final Fantasy XIII* is any indicator that could mean a better quality final product on Sony's console. But do you, the *Play* readers, think that means the PS3 is taking charge of the generation? We asked for your thoughts:

The only thing to consider is supposedly how 'hard' the PS3 is to program for. A lot of developers in my eyes have been lazy with the PS3, and we've had to put up with 360 ports that were cut down anyway because of the DVD limitations. If companies like Valve are saying they're going to make sure PS3 owners don't get a raw deal any more, then it's definitely a sign that PS3 is changing people's opinions now – **the bossman**

The PS3 is getting cheaper, so much so that it's not as expensive compared to the Xbox 360 as it used to be. And you don't have to pay full price for games, you can always just buy pre-owned ones if you're strapped for cash or the games on the Platinum list for 15/20 pounds – **kev schmit**

Join the Play Nation by signing up to our forum at www.play-mag.co.uk/forum



● Jens Matthies expects to continue making games with darker themes at Machinegames.

STAT ATTACK
36
Third-party companies working with Move

GHOSTS OF THE MACHINE



Former Starbreeze developers form Machinegames

Speaking with **Play** recently, Machinegames founder and former creative director of *The Chronicles Of Riddick* and *The Darkness* with Starbreeze, Jens Matthies, has revealed how a desire to make new games drove him and others to go it alone. Machinegames was formed last summer, not long after the release of *Assault On Dark Athena* and the announcement that Starbreeze would be making a Jason Bourne game for EA. The team at this

creative director of Machinegames, told us. "We are no exception in this regard. Currently we have some stellar game concepts for original products in the works and coupled with the experience we've earned over the last decade we feel ready to create something spectacular." He wouldn't, however, be drawn on exactly what Machinegames is working on for its first release, but did admit that we could expect something in the vein of projects from his previous employer.

It is generally seen as preferable to avoid failure rather than reach for greatness

new developer is committed to creating new IP, however, and continuing the legacy of dark, mature and involving games that it pursued at Starbreeze.

"While we enjoy working with licences a lot, I think most developers dream of setting up their own IP," Matthies, now

"From a purely intellectual standpoint we don't really have a preference for the tone of our games, but I think we gravitate towards wanting to express something with meaning and authenticity," Matthies revealed. "This tends to lead us towards darker themes. It's reasonable to conclude that this will continue." What may not continue from his Starbreeze days are licensed games. While Matthies didn't want to discount the possibility of teaming up for a name



brand project he

seemed convinced that all that really mattered was having a passion for your game regardless of its title.

"I think there is a lot of fear guiding the business decisions in our industry," he revealed. "It is generally seen as preferable to avoid failure rather than reach for greatness. The allure of the pre-existing fan base and awareness of an established IP is hard to pass up for any executive. As always, the only method that actually works is to find passionate, experienced people and enable them to do their best work, then spend your brains out on the marketing. It's a pretty simple concept that requires years of business school and many focus group sessions to forget."



Win Half-Minute Hero And Merchandise

The PSP RPG sensation could be yours

HALF-MINUTE HERO is taking the country by storm with its short, sharp bursts of Japanese RPG action and general hilarity. It's arguably the best PSP game released on the platform in 2010 and you could be a part of all the excitement by entering this competition. Five lucky entrants who answer the following question correctly will receive a copy of the game and a *Half-Minute Hero* T-shirt.

HOW MANY HALF-MINUTES IN AN HOUR?

To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject heading 'Half-Minute Hero Comp'. Please include your full name and address. The closing date for entries is **13 May 2010**.



TERMS AND CONDITIONS All entrants must be 18 years old or over. To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line 'Half-Minute Hero Comp'. The closing date for entries is 13 May 2010. Please be aware that answers must be submitted to the above email address only, and any left through the comments section of our website will be automatically disqualified. This competition is open to residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Imagine Publishing has the right to substitute the prize for a similar item of equal or higher value. Employees of Imagine Publishing (including freelancers), their relatives, or any agents are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash. Full terms and conditions are available upon request. From time to time, Imagine Publishing or its agents may send you related material or special offers. If you do not want to receive this, please state it clearly on your competition entry.



Skate 3



Q&A

Jason DeLong

EA Black Box senior producer

Credits: *Warcraft II*, *NBA Live '97*, *NFS: Porsche Unleashed*, *007: Bond Racing*, *007: Agent Under Fire*, *007: Nightfire*, *007: Everything Or Nothing*, *NFS: Most Wanted*, *Skate*, *Skate 2*



Black Box producer Jason DeLong sat down with Play to talk about the role of the community in modern game development and the evolution of the Skate series

To what extent have the new co-op features in *Skate 3* been inspired by what was already being done and requested by *Skate* players?

We do a lot of work with the people who enjoy our game, because ultimately that's who we're making it for. We were inspired by what the community had been doing through the Skate.Reel feature and things like that. Teams were being formed by players who wanted to play in a particular way, going online and playing together and they took

that pretty far with what *Skate 2* could let them do as a team. That was a real challenge for them because they had to choose to co-ordinate themselves; they had to take that initiative. We really wanted to be advocates of the concept of team play since they did such a great thing with it and we were inspired by what they'd achieved. At the end of the day playing with your friends is fun, playing as part of a team is fun and we want to make sure we're encouraging that kind of behaviour. We went back

and looked at all the challenges in *Skate 2* and reconfigured them all for team gameplay, plus we've added some new team challenges.

Does fan feedback also feed into the change in tone with new city Port Calverton?

A lot of Port Calverton is inspiration from real world stuff again like San Vanelona was. It's based around things people always wanted to skate and so we emulated that in some way. But we've spent the past two games with our gameplay designers and modellers honing their craft to create great skating geometry. Port Calverton was a great opportunity for us to flex our creative muscles, learn from what we'd done in the past and take it one step further. The way the city is laid out is in three distinct districts of the university, downtown and industrial area. I've been amazed at what we've been able to get in and how many different ways there are to tackle things. For the average person who might even be new to the franchise the city feels really open, friendly and easy to skate.

Like many developers you seem to be finding a lot of joy in just being involved with your community. Do you see that continuing and perhaps expanding further?

I think we're seeing that not just with us but with all games. That's where the world is going. We have a really close tie to the people who appreciate our game. These are people who love it enough to devote their spare time to just talking about *Skate* and advocating it to others. The *Skate* team has always had a really tight connection with our community with blogs every week and videos being sent in. But in general games are going that way. It's so easy for people to communicate about something through Twitter or Facebook and all these other avenues where people can talk about a common interest.

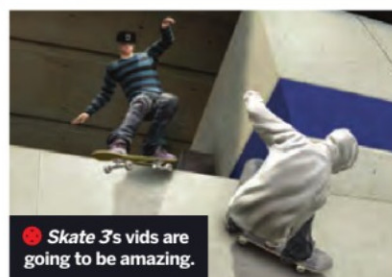
The balance in *Skate* must be a tricky thing to pull off seeing as it's more like a simulation than an arcade game, but neither at the same time. Has that proved to be a challenge?



It wasn't ever an arcade game. It wasn't ever supposed to be a skateboarding sim, but at the same time it was very respectful of skateboarding. The control system was based on the actions of the board and your feet and that's what we tried to re-create. That said there has been a hardcore label placed on *Skate*; people think of it as a niche game. It's easy to pick up and play, but if you want to get into it you have to really play it. We've learned from that, though, and we're doing a lot of things this year to make it more inviting to new players. A lot of people have heard of *Skate* and like skateboarding, but have heard that it's hard and we really want to help bring them in this time. So we're doing things like difficulty settings for our controls so that the basic 'flick-it' control scheme is still there, but there are easy, medium and hard modes now for those who want a different challenge. So if you just want to play through the game and see the story you don't have to be an expert. We also have *Skate School*, which is a new arena we put in so that people



for different people. For some it's the precision of hitting a rail with a specific trick every time and for others it's going 120km/h and jack over a bridge. We want to make sure that we cater to both because both approaches are correct. We've laid the city out to offer a nice smattering of gameplay for both and you can focus on one or the other or cover the whole breadth. Things like Hall Of Meat we're really proud of and that's obviously going to be back and bigger than ever.



development and you can only get so much done in the time you have to get it finished, but you always have ideas of more that you want to do. DLC allows you to keep your game alive and keep creative as a game team to continue to figure things out. For us with the skateboarding world there are always new events coming along like with *Skate 2* we had the Maloof Money Cup as one of our DLCs. We were able to replicate their course and build so you could skate the Maloof Money Cup course before anybody else. We integrated with the event so that when they were talking about the course during the broadcast show they were using our game as the tool to show what the course was like. I hope we can do more things like that in the future.

We have a really close tie to the people who appreciate our game

can learn how to skate and there are a whole load more details coming about that soon. We just want to make sure we're opening up the door for as many people as possible.

For all its attention to detail there are still enough moments of insanity to keep *Skate 2* exciting. Is that a difficult balancing act?

At the end of the day we want the game to be fun and that's different

Something else that *Skate 2* seemed to do

very well was maintain interest with well-timed and well-made DLC. Do you have similar plans for *Skate 3*?

We can't talk too much about DLC for *Skate 3* right now, but just as we did with *Skate 2* we have plans to support the game post release. DLC is a great thing because it's an opportunity for us to continue to improve and give new content to the community. Games have a life cycle in terms of

SKATE 101 A beginner's guide to Skate's mega-moves



GRIND

This is a crooked nosegrind, which is one of a host of grinds you can pull off in the *Skate* series. Grinds involve riding the skateboard on the Trucks usually on a rail or curb. New to *Skate 3* is the darkslide where you grind with the board inverted, standing on the wheel side.



GRAB

Any trick that involved you placing your hands on the board and holding it is a grab of some sort. Here we have pictured a nosegrab. The trick-stick allows you to move your skater's body position while grabbing to get a multitude of different stances from one base grab.



FLIP-TRICK

This involves the skater spinning the board by either kicking it or pushing it while in the air. This can be done by picking up air or from a standing position as a variation on the Ollie or Nollie. Underflips, where you change the direction of the board's rotation mid-trick have been added to *Skate 3*.



HANDPLANT

This may seem easy, but the handplant is actually one of the most challenging tricks in skateboarding. It requires strength, balance, timing and dexterity to pull off. In *Skate 2* all it needed was for you to hold down **R1**, but that's why we love playing skateboarding games.



WALKING

Not the hardest or even the most essential move, it was, however, impossible to do in *Skate*. Thankfully in *Skate 2* the skaters realised that they could take their feet off the board and use them on the ground. This was something of a revelation. Walking returns in *Skate 3*.

Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

	1	God Of War III Sony Kratos reigns supreme on PS3, knocking <i>Modern Warfare 2</i> off the top spot. No mean feat.	88%
	2	Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 Activision Its crown may have been taken by <i>God Of War</i> , but it still dominates the UK sales charts.	94%
	3	Just Cause 2 Square Enix No messing about in the charts for Rico's second outing, even if there is plenty during the game.	87%
	4	FIFA 10 EA World Cup fever continues to build and with it interest in <i>FIFA 10</i> shows no signs of evaporating.	90%
	5	Battlefield: Bad Company 2 EA Strong reviews are really pushing <i>Bad Company 2</i> into the upper echelons of greatness.	93%
	6	Heavy Rain Sony It's been selling so well that Sony had to re-stock shops last month to keep up with demand.	94%
	7	Uncharted 2: Among Thieves Sony A fair few new PS3 owners probably got this with <i>God Of War III</i> . Even so, sales remain strong.	96%
	8	Final Fantasy XIII Square Enix Lots of people discrediting this new instalment in the <i>FF</i> series, but the hardcore fans don't care.	85%
	9	BioShock 2 2K Rapture is falling, but considering the recent competition a top ten finish is very good.	88%
	10	Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing Sega Karting games really do appeal and Sonic's isn't bad. Good omen for <i>ModNation</i> .	78%

PSP CHART

	1	LittleBigPlanet Sony Has Sackboy found his ideal home? There's no signs that sales of <i>LBP</i> on PSP are going to drop off soon.	90%
	2	FIFA 10 EA <i>FIFA</i> continues its dance with <i>LBP</i> for the PSP top spot. Chances are it'll be the same again next month.	NA%
	3	Gran Turismo Sony No budging this racing sim either as people start to forget there was anything called <i>GT5</i> .	85%
	4	Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines Ubisoft The <i>AC</i> brand is one of the strongest to have emerged in this generation, transferring well onto PSP.	77%
	5	Football Manager 2010 Sega <i>GTA</i> drops from the top five, but once again it's the nation's favourite sport that takes the lead.	60%

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.

Instant Expert

All of the pros with none of the prose



Portable Paradise

Tecmo believes *Dead Or Alive Paradise* is pushing the PSP

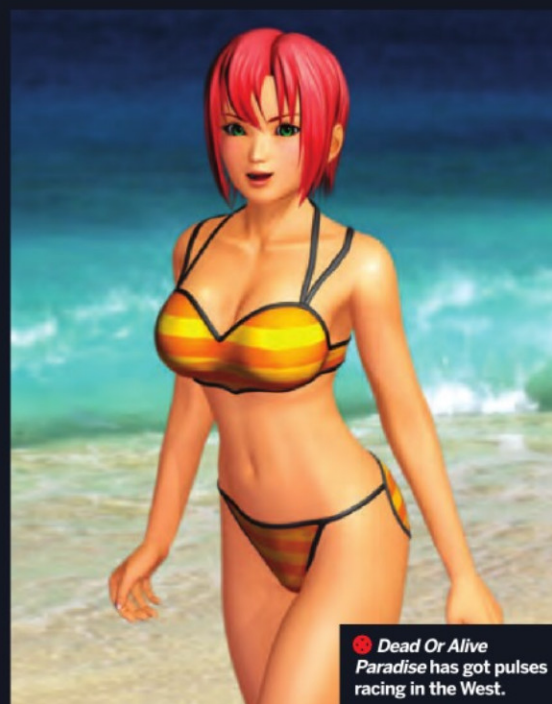
SPEAKING EXCLUSIVELY TO Play, *Dead Or Alive Paradise* director Yoshinori Ueda has said his game's characters are among the most beautiful on PSP as Tecmo continues to pursue the highest possible graphical standards. He also admitted that with the power of current-gen consoles the team could be doing more and pushing themselves further. He believes that despite a lot of negative press in the West, *Paradise* does have an audience on PSP.

"We certainly believe that there are users out there for this kind of game, otherwise we wouldn't have made it," he insisted to us. "With it being on the PSP we wanted to make it valuable as a PSP game and we are focused on creating a very beautiful game. We're trying to push it to be the most beautiful game that we can make." Tecmo's previous games such as *Ninja Gaiden* have always attempted to push hardware as

much as they could, but the PSP remains a console where it still has some exploring to do.

"We feel that there are areas we can still improve, but in *Paradise* we also feel that we have some of the most beautiful characters on the hardware and we've really managed to bring that out," he added. Those beautiful characters have brought a fair amount of criticism with accusations of misogynist depictions of women and overt sexualisation. Tecmo has continued to deny such claims and insisted to us that much of this is simply a clashing of cultures.

In particular, Tecmo believes that certain forms of pop culture in Japan such as Idol films and 'gravure' pictorials simply don't have comparison in the West and so the message becomes confused. "There's obviously a lot of influence from things like idol movies and pictorials in magazines," Ueda told us.



Dead Or Alive Paradise has got pulses racing in the West.

Whether you like it or not, we could see a 3D *Metal Gear* in the not-too-distant future.



THREE DIMENSIONAL MISGIVINGS

Metal Gear Online goes 3D

OUR MAN IN JAPAN

PlayStation pondering from the East

I hate this 3D fad. Thanks to *Avatar*, in a few years I'll have to put on an unwieldy set of glasses every time I want to do anything fun. Want to watch the next Pixar movie? Put on the glasses. Playing *Resident Evil*? Put on the glasses. In five years, we'll need 3D glasses to play or watch anything short of reruns of *Father Ted*. In Japan, this terrifying future is coming to fruition in the form of *Metal Gear Arcade* (MGA). I had the chance to

It is unlikely that MGA will ever see the light of day outside of Japan

immerse myself in Hideo Kojima's world of tomorrow at the AOU Entertainment Expo, an annual arcade game trade show in Japan – think Tokyo Game Show with only arcade games.

Chances are you've already played MGA. The game takes *Metal Gear Solid 4*'s multiplayer component and repackages it in an arcade cabinet with 5.1 surround sound and a 3D screen. Arcades will have several cabinets networked together, allowing for local competition. However, people in Japanese arcades don't like to interact with strangers. Take fighting game cabinets for instance. In the West, players share a screen and stand shoulder to shoulder when taking the virtual piss out of each other. In Japan, two screens are placed facing away from each other. You

never see the face of your opponent, and it's considered rude to check the other side of the cabinet after a match. So if you just lost a round of *Street Fighter*, and you're wondering who destroyed you, don't try to sneak a glance at the chain-smoking twentysomething who did, otherwise not only will he know you suck at *Street Fighter* – he'll also consider you a jackass.

In a country where looking at someone at the wrong time in a crowded arcade is considered rude, it's unlikely that networked play will gain much

traction. Thankfully, MGA also supports online play, as well as special co-op missions, so gamers

don't have to interact with anyone even when they leave the house.

While the game is almost exactly the same as its PlayStation counterpart, there's no Sixaxis or DualShock 3 in the cabinet. Instead, players get a fake gun with an analogue stick on the front. The trigger fires the gun, while one on the side reloads. A pair of buttons on the front of the gun control rolling and crouching. Here's the catch – the analogue stick only controls player movement. It plays the same role that the left stick on the DualShock 3 does in MGS 4. So, what about the right stick, the one that controls your view on the PS3? MGA attempts to fill that role with head tracking. A sensor attached to the 3D glasses monitors what direction the player is looking. If you want to look



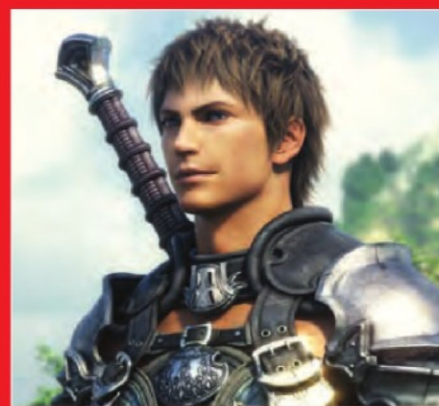
up, all you have to do, in theory, is look up. If you want to turn, look left or right. However, the sensitivity of the hardware leaves something to be desired. Every time I wanted to change direction, I had to flick my head like a nervous rodent scavenging for food. What's worse, when I looked up and wanted to fire at an enemy above, I had to keep my head at an upward angle, making it difficult to look at the screen. In the line at Konami's booth, I watched other players in the same

predicament, looking over their noses as they futilely attempted to co-ordinate their gun sights with the analogue stick and lateral head movements. When combined with the dark 3D glasses, this makes the average MGA player look like a gun-wielding Ray Charles.

For better or worse, it is unlikely that MGA will ever see the light of day outside of Japan. However, given the PlayStation 3's ability to support 3D imagery, a 3D *Metal Gear* is a possibility... god, I hate 3D.

Final Fantasy XIV Beta

Square Enix announced the *Final Fantasy XIV* alpha and beta at its annual *Final Fantasy XI* show, VanaFest, on 28 February. All show attendees will be able to participate in the alpha, and FFXI players who apply will be eligible for the beta. Sadly, codes were only given to fans, not press, meaning intrepid writers, such as myself, were left out. Square Enix did not announce when these tests would start.



OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month



Big Daddy Plush Doll

£24.99 at Play.com

Ever since the first *BioShock 2* teaser video where we saw a young girl holding a Big Daddy doll on a beach, we've wanted one for ourselves. After all it can't possibly get more manly than having a Big Daddy toy can it? That's like ten times more manly than an Action Man easily.

Half-Minute Hero Knight Shirt

£18 at BagOfBees.co.uk

Half-Minute Hero has to be one of the best PSP games ever made and it's only right that anyone who plays it should spread the word more than just verbally. Wear your devotion on your sleeve and chest with this great shirt and the world will know the power of RPGs completed in 30 seconds.



Blade of Chaos Replica

\$149.99 at BigBadToyStore.com

Still feeling the Kratos love after *GOW III*? Finding it hard to put the series behind you after such an epic adventure? Well, maybe you should invest in this scary replica of his famous Blades of Chaos. Not sure about trying to import it, though. That may cause more hassle than it's worth.

Origami Sticky Notes

\$3.99 at ThinkGeek.com

We're still on a bit of a *Heavy Rain* high at the moment. It may not have been a long game, but its impact has been felt. One unexpected result is an increased interest in origami on the *Play* team so these cool Post-it notes with origami designs on made perfect sense to us.



Futurama Mini Blind-Boxed Figure

\$8.99 each at BigBadToyStore.com

Sometimes it's worth taking a gamble regardless of what the outcome will be. Such is the case with these blind-boxed *Futurama* figures. You may not know what you'll get, but it's bound to be a cool little mascot one way or another.



Utility Belt iPod

£16.48 at MySoti.com

So there you have it, proof positive that while cleaning up the streets of Gotham Batman likes nothing more than to listen to a personalised playlist of thumping tunes.



Panda Pile

£14.62 at MySoti.com

For one reason or another we find a pile of pandas to be very amusing. That level of amusing, in fact, that makes getting up in the morning more pleasurable.

CONDITIONS: Enter discount code when placing order. MySoti.com discount code only valid on featured items between 15 April and 12 May. Visit MySoti.com for even more great T-shirts.

IN FOCUS

Things to see and do before the next issue of Play arrives



Super Street Fighter IV

Developer Capcom Publisher Capcom Release Date 30 April

IT'S BEEN A quick return to the well for Capcom with *SSFIV*, which took some by surprise, but with the additional content, so many more characters and the same great gameplay, it's easy to see why Capcom would want to get this game out to fans. It's still accessible enough for newcomers to get into, but we would consider this a game for the hardcore *Street Fighters*, giving them access to some of their favourite characters from *Street Fighter III* as well as some exciting new fighters whose styles and movesets should be enough to make waves online.



Iron Man 2

Distributor: Paramount Pictures Director: Jon Favreau Release Date: 7 May

THE WORLD FELL in love with Tony Stark on his first big-screen outing and because of that this Marvel-made comic-book franchise stands out as the first of the summer blockbusters this year. With the introduction of War Machine, Whiplash, Black Widow and Justin Hammer to the cast, we hope this sequel doesn't get too bloated.

The Chaos

Artist: The Futureheads Label: Nul Records Release Date: 26 April

THIS IS THE fourth album from this Sunderland-based band. While there have been subtle changes in themes and style over the years, the base sound of angular guitars and pounding rhythms has held firm throughout. Expect something similar and equally brilliant from *The Chaos*.



London Marathon

Why: Because people like a challenge Where: Central London When: 26 April

NOW CONSIDERED TO be the biggest sporting event in the UK every year, the London Marathon is also the biggest fundraising event of the year. It is of course also a major athletics event for marathon runners and one of the most prestigious to win.

Men Who Stare At Goats

Studio: Momentum Pictures Director: Grant Heslov Release Date: 19 April

MANY PEOPLE THINK of this as a Coen Brothers movie and it's easy enough to see why given its rather bizarre premise and sense of humour, but this is far too obviously played for laughs to be a true Coen flick. It still splits opinion, though, but it has to be worth a look for another excellent oddball performance from Clooney.



Out This Month

For a full rundown of the release dates of every PlayStation game visit www.nowgamer.com/release-dates

Visit **NOWGamer**

FRIDAY 23 APRIL



Dead To Rights: Retribution

Namco Bandai

PS3

£44.99

Best Price: £25.99 from JackOfAllGames.co.uk

A very violent, very silly action thriller in which you sometimes get to play as a dog that specialises in biting men in the testicles really hard.



Nier

Square Enix

PS3

£44.99

Best Price: £31.99 from JackOfAllGames.co.uk

Square Enix RPG with big swears and lots of stuff that looks suspiciously like Bayonetta's hair, but isn't.

FRIDAY 30 APRIL



2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa

EA

PS3/PSP

£49.99/£24.99

Best Price: £31.99 (PS3) from JackOfAllGames.co.uk

Basically just *FIFA 10* with fewer teams and players, and lots of official World Cup aesthetics. Great game but not great value.



Iron Man 2

Sega

PS3/PSP

£49.99/£29.99

Best Price: £36.85 (PS3) from ShopTo.net

The last *Iron Man* game wasn't much cop, and we'd expect much the same from this one. You never know, though.



Super Street Fighter IV

Capcom

PS3

£44.99

Best Price: £21.86 from ShopTo.net

Like *Street Fighter IV* only superer, if that's even possible. If that's even a word. It's not a word, but who cares?

FRIDAY 7 MAY



Fireburst

Tradewest

PS3

£39.99

Best Price: £29.49 from GamesPier.co.uk

Okay, so it's not exactly *Burnout*, and it's not exactly *Split/Second*, or *Blur*, or even *FlatOut*. But, y'know, cheap 'n' cheerful and all that.

PLAY MOST WANTED

The games that get the **Play** team out of bed in the mornings



Red Dead Redemption

Rockstar PS3 May 2010

After last month's exclusive cover feature we wanted this lot, and now we want it even more having sampled some multiplayer action. It's a lot like *Grand Theft Auto* only with better hats and loads of dynamite. See page 48 of this very issue for more exciting details and some new shots of the multiplayer modes.



Final Fantasy XIV Online

Square Enix PS3 October 2010

So *Final Fantasy XIII* might not quite have been the stunner we hoped for, but we still can't help but look forward to anything bearing the *Final Fantasy* name, and *FFXIV* is no exception. The last online *Final Fantasy* didn't take off in Europe, but the PS3 is much better equipped for the purpose than the PS2.

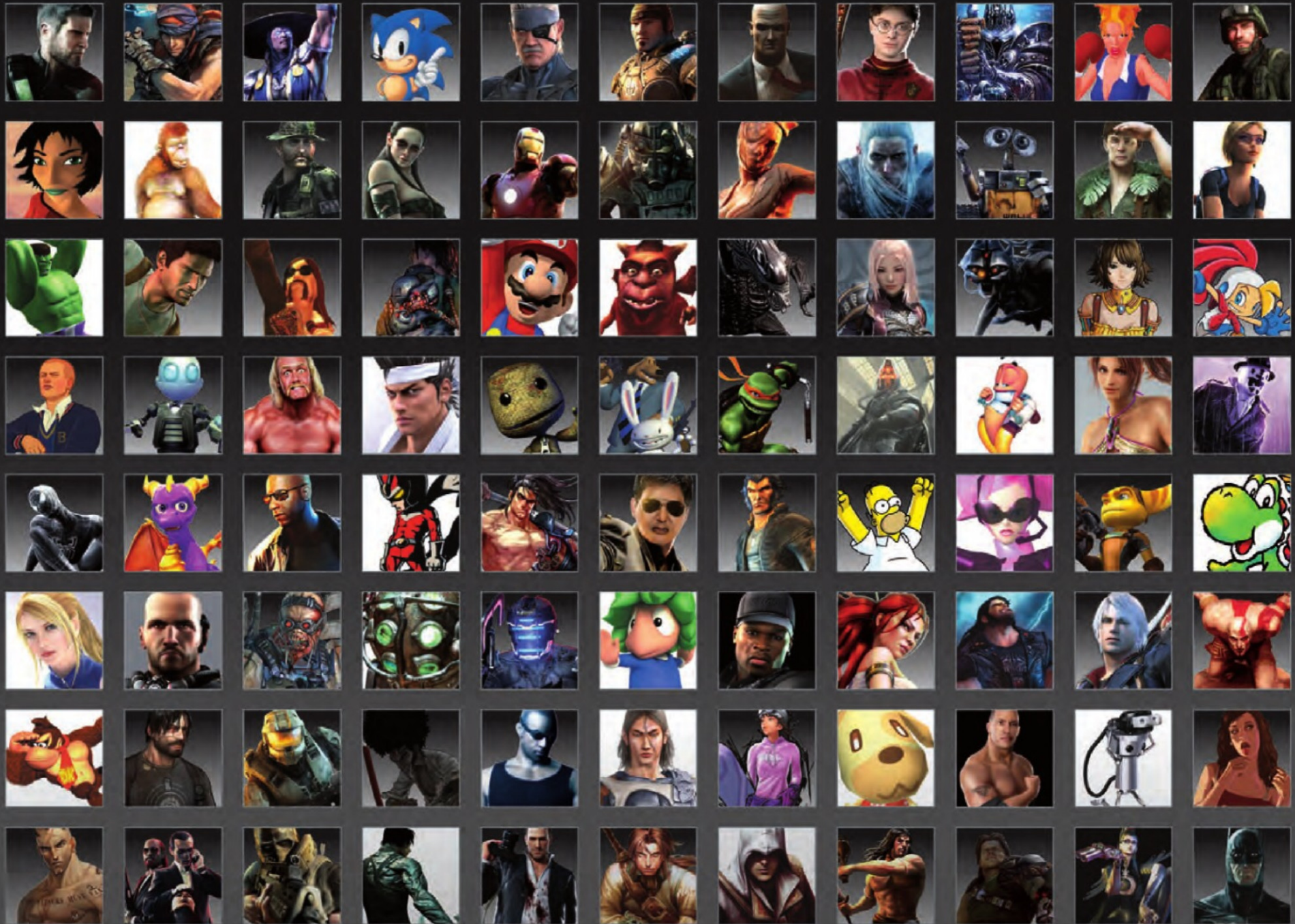


UFC Undisputed 2010

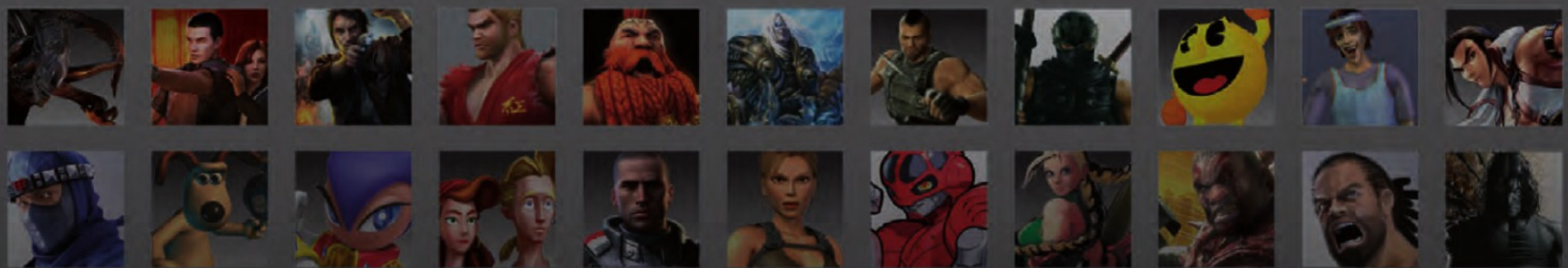
THQ PS3 May 2010

UFC 2009 took us all by surprise with its awesomeness last year, even if it was a little barren, so we're very much looking forward to seeing how Yuke's builds on that solid foundation. We'd like a more interesting career mode and more intuitive grappling mechanics this time, please. Thanks very much.

E V E R Y F O R M A T
E V E R Y G A M E



O N E C H O I C E



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Where hype and hyperbole are welcome

PLACE YOUR BETS

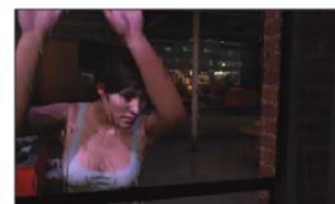
Gambling website backs another PS3 breakdown saga

THEY SAY: A popular gambling website has made the PS3 the favourite among the current-gen consoles to suffer the next global hardware fault. This move came only hours after the resolution of a calendar fault that knocked out virtually every pre-Slim edition PS3 on the planet, including debug consoles used by developers and journalists. "The PS3 has recently earned the unfortunate reputation of being the Toyota of the games console industry and is the bookies' favourite to be next for a repeat performance of yesterday's calamity," was the betting giant's assessment. It had the PS3 as the 11/8 favourite over the Xbox 360 at 7/4 and Wii at 2/1.

WE SAY: The Toyota of the games console industry? That makes perfect sense. PS3s have been crashing and killing their users around the world resulting in a global recall after all. Oh, wait. No they haven't. This was one of the most ridiculous stories to come out of the ApocalyPS3, but by no means our favourite. We also liked the story that the PS3 had been hacked, which was funny since even consoles offline were affected and the belief that the 'fix' for the problem proved Sony could access any PS3 anywhere in the world whenever it wanted. Best of all is a prediction of a December 'baby boom' as PS3 owners spent time with their other halves while their PS3s were out of action.



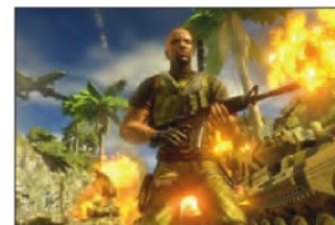
stop 
please



QTEs Banned

THEY SAY: The United Arab Emirates has banned *Heavy Rain* from release in the region. No explanation was given, but Sony released a statement saying the game's violence and nudity was handled in a "mature and sensitive manner."

WE SAY: So chances are it was banned for the boobs and blood, but we're going to say it was because UAE hates quick-time events.



Violent Offenders

THEY SAY: More legal issues for games in Venezuela as those importing, selling or promoting violent videogames could face up to five years in prison. This news comes after the nation's president described games as "poison."

WE SAY: While we would agree that the recent *Dynasty Warriors* releases have been poor, we would hardly call them criminal.

LOSING FAITH

Violent videogame sewer destroying youth

THEY SAY: The Church Of England has described violent games as a 'sewer' that are corrupting young people and playing their part in the losing battle to save mankind's souls. Referring to the Byron report, which recommended tighter regulation of adult games, former MP Tom Benyon claimed parents could do little to stop the flow of violence into the home. "A bubbling sewer of gratuitously violent and sexual pornography in DVD games are washing all around us," he said.

WE SAY: We thought we should add the following comment from the Archbishop of York on the subject of violent games, made on the anniversary of Nelson Mandela's release from prison. "On this great day of celebrating 20 years since Mandela came out of prison, can we help our young people to come out of the prison of these awful, awful videogames?" he asked. Wow. Not sure we have anything we can possibly say to counter a cutting simile like that one.



Blame Game

THEY SAY: A below-par performance in games sales in the last few months compared with the same period in 2009 has been blamed on lower than expected sales of *Heavy Rain*, *BioShock* and *Dante's Inferno*.

WE SAY: Actually all those games did rather well by anyone's estimations. The decline of the music genre had a much bigger impact.

Keep Up With Play



Never fall behind with Imagine eShop

Fallen behind with your **Play** purchases? Been out of the country for a while and found yourself in some mad, inhospitable place that doesn't stock the world's greatest PlayStation magazine? Fear not. You need never miss an issue of **Play** or find your collection full of holes thanks to the Imagine eShop. There you can buy the latest issue of the magazine direct, subscribe to **Play** and even pick up those elusive back issues that you may have missed. We know how important it is that you get every last scrap of **Play** brilliance in your brains. The eShop is a veritable Aladdin's cave of **Play** goodness and you can access it all at www.imagineshop.co.uk.

Follow Play



Keep up to date with the Play Twitter feeds

Sometimes all you need is 140 characters to get your message across so why not follow the

Play team on their Twitter feeds to get all the latest news, opinions and gossip as it happens from the **Play** office? Get immediate reactions to the newest games being reviewed, links to cool features and all the other weird thoughts and ideas Keith, Gavin, Jon and Ian have to share. You can find links to each of their Twitter accounts at Play-Mag.co.uk or go direct with @PlayMagKeith, @PlayMagGav, @PlayMagJon or @PlayMagIan.

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argue about the latest games, reveal upcoming titles we've seen first hand and wax lyrical about great PlayStation gaming moments. Our monthly podcast show is always packed full of opinion, facts, news and usually someone having to leave to have a little bit of a cry. We pull no punches on the **Play** Podcast. You can download individual episodes from www.Play-Mag.co.uk.

WWW.PLAY-MAG.CO.UK

Reload

All the news you might have missed from Play-Mag.co.uk



GOW III Ending Cut

It was revealed that the original ending for *God Of War III* was very different to the one we got, but no matter because it could return as DLC. According to *GOW III*'s director Stig Asmussen, such DLC would also be free.



Sony Buys Media Molecule

In an unheralded but not unexpected move, Sony has bought indie developer and creator of *LittleBigPlanet*, Media Molecule. The deal was intended to strengthen and formalise the relationship between studio and publisher.



Top Five Console Meltdowns

The PS3 went a bit berserk just after we went to press last issue as you may know. Calendar faults seemed to be the cause, but it was hardly the worst console meltdown gamers have witnessed, as Gav discovered.



Red And Loving It

American McGee, the creator of *Alice*, a dark take on the original Lewis Carroll tale, has revealed his latest fairy tale project at GDC. *Red* is a take on the *Little Red Riding Hood* story, but McGee is still looking for a publisher for the game.



Valve Snubs PS3 Again?

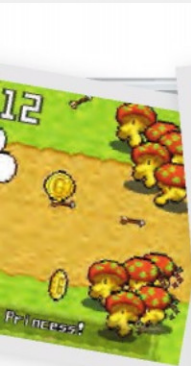
Half-Life creator Valve has announced a sequel to *Portal* for late 2010, but it doesn't look as if the PS3 will be enjoying it. Despite getting the original, Valve has only announced *Portal 2* for PC and 360.



Insomniac Jumping Ship?

Rumours suggest Insomniac, maker of *Resistance*, could be going multiplatform and forsaking its PS exclusivity. The studio is independent of Sony and could do this quite easily, but its titles would likely stay with Sony.

"I think it would be fantastic to see the game (move) onto a handheld system. Each one of the episodes is sort of like a standalone thing and I think we could do that pretty easily" – Naughty Dog co-president Evan Wells on *Uncharted PSP*



Console APB Would Need Redesign

Realtime Worlds' street crime MMO *APB*, thought to be a massively multiplayer *GTA*, would need a major redesign to work on consoles according to studio boss and original *GTA* creator, Dave Jones.



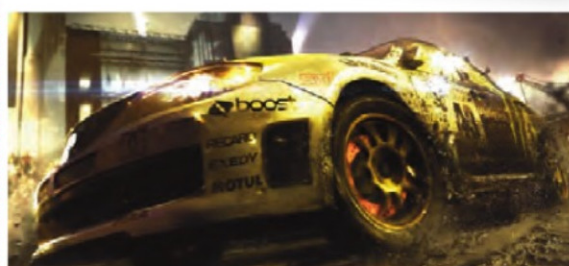
New Devs For COD Series

Much has happened with the *COD* franchise recently after a shake up at Infinity Ward and a new developer was confirmed for the series. No word on where this leaves IW, but it is "still central," according to Activision.



From Snow To Skate

Ubisoft has announced a *Shaun White Skateboarding* game, seemingly looking to fill the void left by poor sales of *Tony Hawk: Ride*. Shaun White already put his name to a snowboarding game, also published by Ubisoft, but he is also an accomplished skateboarder.



DiRT 3 In Development

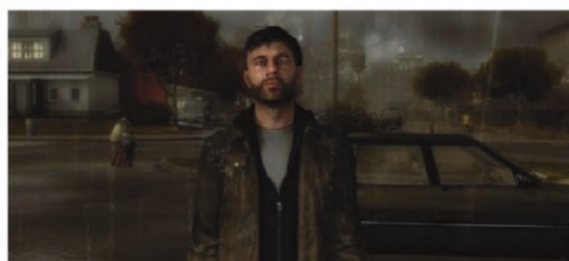
Codemasters VP Gavin Cheshire has accidentally revealed that work on *Colin McRae: DiRT 3* has begun. The last game was a big success and Codies would be silly not to take advantage. No word on dates, though.

"Publishers are a blessing to me. The last thing in the world I want to do is spend my time thinking about how to get boxes on trucks and send them to stores" – Gearbox president Randy Pitchford shows the publishers some love



Best Games For Travelling

The PSP doesn't always get the love it deserves, but we appreciate the gaming time it gives us. Not all its games are suited for gaming on the go, so we recommended the best of recent games for long or short commutes.



Hate For Heavy Rain

Play likes *Heavy Rain*, but for some reason its games editor Gavin Mackenzie doesn't feel the same way. He attempted to explain his deviant point of view, but was only met with a torrent of abuse from the web. She can be a cruel mistress at times and he felt her wrath.

word on the tweet

The wild ramblings and opinions of Tweeting game developers revealed!

DCDeacon



This is really not a good time for *God Of War III* to come out. I'm still trying to get through titles from the end of last year. *groan*

Bethesda's Pete Hines wishes he had time to play Sony's latest blockbuster.

therealcliffyb



Firing up *Heavy Rain*, can't stop thinking about Chubby Rain from Eddie Murphy's *Bowfinger* flick. **Epic's design director** suffers from a familiar problem as he begins *Heavy Rain*. *Spoiler*

They both end with a kung fu sequence.

HMXCasey



Just had to explain to Jeff Rubin, Harmonix Coder, that no, eating 3 Ranch Snack Wraps are not healthier than eating a Quarter Pounder

Casey Malone, designer at Harmonix, reveals *Rock Band* creators' eating habits.

mmalex



My time machine has gone kaput! No blinking lights, No noises, just dead suddenly. My backup device failed first: old stuff gone :(

Media Molecule's Alex Evans appears to be having some technical difficulties.

TimOfLegend



Getting mad at Activision for this kind of thing is like getting mad at an ape for throwing feces. It's just how the beast communicates

Tim Schafer, CEO of Double Fine, has his say on matters concerning *Call Of Duty*.

Heilemann



I've got a note that reads: Cyborg Suicide Assassin. Yeah, that's my note alright

Could Michael Heilemann, designer with IO Interactive, be dropping clues of the developer's next project?

evan_wells



Finished *GOW III* last night! Stunning! No reason not to buy this game if you have a PS3, and if you don't, you should buy one to play it!

Evan Wells, co-president of Naughty Dog, endorses Kratos's latest adventure.

PLAY₃ Investigates

The inside scoop on everything PlayStation

Can Lightning Strike Twice?

Sequels are once again big business – but can the likes of BioShock 2 and God Of War III hope to capture the spirit of their predecessors?

In 2009, one game more than any other proved why publishers love sequels – *Modern Warfare 2* broke numerous records on its way to raking in \$1 billion after just two months on release, becoming one of the quickest-selling entertainment franchises ever in the process. 2009 could well have been dubbed the 'year of the blockbuster videogame sequels' with franchise titles dominating 12-month sales, especially on the PlayStation 3 – in fact, UK figures show that among the 20 bestselling PS3 titles, only *inFamous*, *LittleBigPlanet* and *Arkham Asylum* were original videogame IPs. So how did the industry become so sequel-focused, and as discerning gamers should we be concerned at a lack of originality in the future?

The science behind the rise of the videogame sequel is simple. The benefits of a pre-existing fan base have long been exploited for movies and books, and since the very beginnings of the industry, videogames have been no exception. Sequels are certainly nothing new, but the factors behind such a watershed year as 2009 may be slightly more complex.

The global recession may go some way to explaining the trend among publishers to offer consumers what they regard as a sure thing at retail over the last year – but disappointing sales (or projected sales) may also have had an effect on the high number of industry lay-offs and studio closures, with Pandemic and Grin among the high-profile casualties – despite

neither being strangers to working on big franchises and game sequels.

There are other factors that make sequels more attractive to developers than producers in other creative industries. Unlike movies, the law of diminishing returns rarely applies to videogames, with many studios investing heavily to make their original IPs

sequel-friendly – the process of creating characters, narrative, an engine and fundamental gameplay mechanics can be costly and time-consuming, but once done it makes sense for developers to reuse and tweak such assets. "We invest a lot of time upfront in the IP creation. We create an intellectual property bible at the outset of all our franchises and games," Ray Muzyka, co-founder of BioWare, explains. "It takes six months to a year for a substantial amount of people – writers and designers, artists and animators – to create the look and feel, context and setting, design and characters, and history and timeline of a world, so that when you play through a game it's almost like you're looking at an iceberg where a certain amount of it's visible to the player, but the remainder is below the surface." Steve Papoutsis at Visceral Games concurs: "On *Dead Space* we started with a ton of back story in order to understand our universe, so moving on to a sequel would be something we could do if demand and support were there for it." Should a *Dragon Age: Origins* sequel ever be on the cards, Muzyka thinks that all the



● *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* is the latest title in the long-running FPS series.

DO ME

▶ CAN LIGHTNING STRIKE TWICE?

Gearbox has supported *Borderlands* with loads of downloadable content.

initial effort will make the development process smoother. "It is easier to write brand extensions, ancillary product extensions, and to have continuity with the story arc when writing sequels and post-release DLC and that sort of thing – because you have all that rich back story and history and art, and we draw on that all the time."

Although sequels are good for business, they also offer developers the chance to refine and improve their work; with fan power at its peak, gamers' feedback can also be incorporated into a redesigned sequel. "In my mind, a good sequel is one which trumps its predecessor with a better in-game experience," DICE's Karl-Magnus Troedsson told *Play*. "It's a game which the core audience agrees is of higher quality and a step forward for the series. A big part of the success of a sequel is best measured by the response from the players who enjoyed the prequel."

However, it's pretty much a given goal for all follow-up titles to not only satisfy the true believers but also attract a new and wider audience. "The approach to sequels shouldn't just be 'more, more, more' though. "It's equally important to polish and hone what you've already got," Troedsson added.

Sequels offer videogame developers the chance to refine and improve their work

A recent example of a successfully refined sequel is Ubisoft Montreal's *Assassin's Creed*; the original was a bold attempt to fuse a number of ideas, but fell short in a number of areas, while last year's follow-up was widely praised for addressing its predecessor's issues. "I believe the first condition is to be able to have a good, dispassionate and very honest look at your predecessor," explains *Assassin's Creed II* producer Sebastien Puel. "Where do we come from? What did ▶

EA Black Box Opens Up

Skate 3 producer Jason DeLong lays it down for us

What makes a good sequel?

A good sequel needs to embody the spirit of what made the original great, but also take the franchise in a new, surprising direction. When creating a sequel, you need to think not in terms of 'let's make a sequel to a great game', but rather 'let's go make the greatest game.'

What are the pros and cons of working on a sequel?

Working on a sequel can be very liberating, in that it gives you a chance to 'fix' those things you wished were just that much better. It also allows you to think very creatively and approach your franchise with 'fresh eyes.'

When developing new IP how big a consideration are potential sequels?

When creating a new IP, your original design is inevitably many times more ambitious than you are actually able to implement within the time and budget you have. So from this perspective, you always pray you'll be given the opportunity to continue with the

franchise to realise both the original vision and implement new ideas.

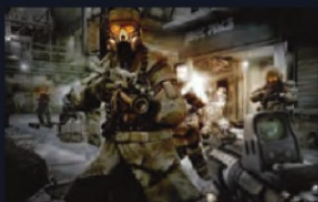
Is testing the market/trying new features/listening to the community across multiple games now an accepted way to evolve a franchise?

Absolutely – the collective knowledge of a group is always far greater than that of an individual, and communities are a great resource for both feedback and new idea generation.

How does the current age of intense gamer/community feedback/scrutiny affect development of sequels?

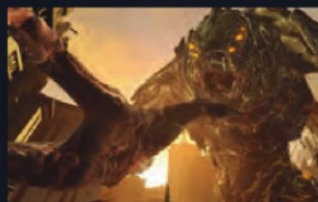
Feedback is always something you need to take into consideration when making a sequel – after all, the community are the reason we're making the game in the first place. That said, implementing every wish and desire that finds its way onto the message boards would likely take more time and money than anyone has, so you have to be judicious when deciding which suggestions are right for your game.

Gimme Some More The Five PlayStation Sequels Topping Our Wish List



KILLZONE 3

It's been over a year now since Guerrilla Games' shooter hit the PS3 – the technology is ready to go and the PS3 audience has grown dramatically in that time, so a third *Killzone* is just a matter of when, rather than if. Sony will also want to be looking for its killer motion-control and 3D apps – *Killzone* could feature the latter, although the last game already pushed the console to its limits.



RESISTANCE 3

It's already been hinted at on a billboard in a Hollywood movie, and judging by the excellent *Resistance 2*, Insomniac knows how to refine its games. With *Modern Warfare 2* perpetuating the contemporary shooter genre, the sci-fi storyline in *Resistance* represents the perfect antithesis of setting and design. We can't wait to see which way the Chimera invasion goes next.



GRAN TURISMO 5

This has to be good. Driving simulation is pretty much the only genre not yet available on the PS3 and we've literally been waiting for this for years. Forget rumours of a track editor, motorbikes and head tracking – gamers know what to expect from the series, and that's a realistic driving experience. Or it would be if we believed it was ever going to be released.



UNCHARTED 3

The unanimous praise for *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*, as well as its subtle innovations over the first game, make this a must on any gamers' wish list. Naughty Dog is probably still recovering from creating the second game, but we're sure that the decision to turn Nathan Drake's adventures into a trilogy will be a no-brainer for the top brass at Sony.



GTA V

This is probably some way off, but you can be sure that Rockstar is already thinking about the next game in one of gaming's biggest franchises. With *Red Dead* proving what Rockstar can do dynamically, we expect to see some sort of wholesale changes, too, either in gameplay mechanics or setting. We'll just have to get stuck into *Episodes From Liberty City* while we wait.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS: *Metal Gear Solid: Rising*, *Batman: Arkham Asylum 2*, *Fallout: New Vegas*, *Mass Effect 3*, *Twisted Metal PS3*

Ubisoft Montreal Speaks

Assassin's Creed II executive producer, Sebastien Puel talks sequels...

What are the pros and cons of working on a sequel?

Obviously, having an established fan base, knowing how many people you'll talk to is a huge plus. You can commit to a big budget because you know there are people to play your game. Another pro is that a lot of mistakes are behind you: a sequel is built upon the technology of its predecessor – so very often you get the chance to work on good, exciting content rather than on raw technology.

On the other hand, you see a lot of franchises that were innovative in their first iteration and that gradually lost their edge because they re-hashed the same mechanics over and over again. We are trying to avoid that – for this team, a sequel is not a ten per cent improvement

on the previous game, not just a new story, new character and the same mechanics. I hope *ACII* is proof of that – we kept the core elements of the game (climbing, fighting, navigating in crowds) and added lots of new mechanics that, I believe, brought a lot to the experience.

When developing new IP, how big a consideration are potential sequels?

I can't answer in general. As a producer you might get the chance to work on a small number of 'new IP' in a whole career. As far as *Assassin's Creed* is concerned we never thought of it as a standalone experience. Since the beginning we keep thinking ahead and we are building a complete and consistent universe. The vision of Patrice Désilets, our creative

director, is not limited to one or two games. We have many more stories in front of us; some will be translated into games, others into comics or novels...

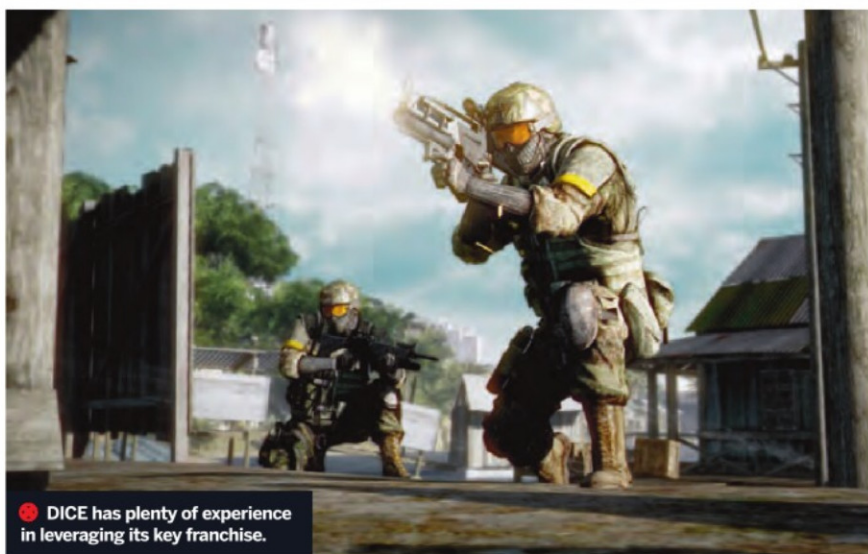
In your opinion, how is the trend for sequels affecting the industry?

When sequels are seen with the approach of 'do the same thing – change the story and that's it'. I think it limits the overall creativity of the industry. If you think about sequels as opportunities to deepen your mechanics, expand the experience and fully develop original ideas I think it's very positive. *ACII* would have never been possible without the experience and the technologies built on *ACI*; a game like that is in the end the result of a six-year cycle (production time of *ACI* and *ACII*). So, in

a word, as long as sequels are bigger and better than their predecessors, the gamer is the winner in the end.

Assassin's Creed II is a great example of a refined sequel that surpasses the original – how much of a balancing act is it to retain what worked in the first game, with adding new features?

Thanks for the compliment. It was a very natural – if not easy – process. I think we knew that the core mechanics of the game worked well: they were fun, unique and innovative. Then, as I said, our work was to listen to feedback (people need to know that we *do* read their comments on your forums) and also adapt our mechanics to this new hero and time period. The rest is just hard work!



⚙️ DICE has plenty of experience in leveraging its key franchise.



⚙️ Despite tremendous post-launch support, *Borderlands* could get a sequel.

➤ we do well? What needs to be improved? What was simply bad? For that, listening to gamers is the key. As developers you tend to be very committed to certain features or aspects of the game – sometimes just because they were hard to produce for instance. Get rid of all that, go on the forums, listen to the fans, to the press and collect as much information as you can. This doesn't mean that you will deliver exactly what people want – but you need to understand what their expectations are. Then make your mind up and stick to your convictions during the rest of the production." The perseverance paid off, with the second outing hailed as one of the games of last year – sales didn't disappoint either, with Ubisoft shifting 6 million copies of its sequel within two months of the game's release; the original eventually reached sales of 8 million units worldwide according to the publisher.

One game generally felt not to need a sequel was 2K's outstanding *BioShock*. Itself a 'spiritual successor' to the *System Shock* series, *BioShock* emerged at the end of 2008 – but its great visuals, polished gameplay and conclusive narrative would appear to make its recent sequel redundant. *BioShock 2* producer Jordan Thomas disagrees, arguing that the sequel adds depth to the original in a way that excites both the game's makers and consumers. "One of the things about working on a sequel that is satisfying both for the developers and the fans is that sense of known quantities: there are existing variables that you can build off of," he says. "For the people who decided to participate in it who are familiar, you can build longer-term character developments, you can reflect back on things and show they weren't exactly as they seemed, and so forth. That's been an enjoyable ride for us."

New Kid On The Block

The secret behind a successful new IP

BORDERLANDS WAS ONE of the most successful new gaming IPs of 2009 according to developer Gearbox Software. The studio's CEO and president Randy Pitchford had talked openly about his apprehensions in launching an original concept in the run-up to *Borderlands*' release, but despite an untested fusion of FPS and RPG elements, as well as a distinctive visual style, the game went on to sell well on PS3, Xbox 360 and PC. The exact reasons for *Borderlands*' success are difficult to determine, but we think that the game's dependence on levelling up, choice of weapons, split-screen/online co-operative elements and, crucially, post-launch DLC support make it a very attractive, value-packed package. A pre-*Modern Warfare 2* release certainly didn't hurt sales, and it also helps that *Borderlands* is a 'gamer's game' and although accessible, has an inherent charm that gamers will recognise. Gearbox has already hinted at the possibility of a sequel and we wouldn't bemoan it the chance to tweak the core concept.



⚙️ Many were surprised when 2K announced a sequel to *BioShock*...



DICE Speaks

DICE executive producer Karl-Magnus Troedsson chats about sequels...

What are the pros and cons of working on a sequel?

One of the most obvious advantages is to have the same, and now more

experienced dev team from the first game continue working with known tech and tools. It cannot be overstated how much this can do for the quality of a game. It also helps when you don't have to reinvent key components like new characters or a new universe. Basically, the more time spent polishing, iterating and improving instead of reinventing, the better the sequel.

The negative with working on a sequel could be summarised as brand fatigue. As a developer you have to make sure to add the right amount of innovation and spend the rest of the time polishing so both the dev team as well as the players find it fresh. Too many sequels, too tightly launched after each other isn't a good idea since not only are you running the risk of starting to bore your players, you'd probably also end up with a pretty disgruntled dev team, fed up with churning out games with less and less love and dedication.

When developing new IP, how big a consideration are potential sequels?

When developing a brand-new game it's natural to consider the idea of it turning into a franchise. However, this is just financial wet dreams unless the first game is a success. At DICE we approach this by starting with the core experience, focusing on making a really fun game and then, if it flies, we can start planning for future, more ambitious endeavours.

Do publishers put undue pressure on developers to make sequels?

Not every developer is in the same situation, but ours isn't like this. People love to hate certain ideas but I'm sorry to say that there's no evil corporation, pulling the strings and forcing the poor developer to stamp out poor quality games. Many developers do this by themselves. What does exist is a common ambition which all companies share and that is to run a successful business. In our case it's important to understand that we don't see this contradicting our passion for making

great games. This is where sequels can make a lot of sense. It would be dumb of a developer to start reinventing the wheel if the prequel was a success. If you got a franchise going then keep doing high-quality sequels at a pace which doesn't risk the brand, make sure it attracts more and more people and then start trying out brand-new game ideas on the side.

In your opinion, how is the trend for sequels affecting the industry?

The trend seems to be that the hordes of players are gravitating towards the known franchises. It's been interesting to see the holiday sales charts the last years where, if you exaggerate slightly, all top ranking games have had either a 2, 3 or a 4 after it. To me this holds one very important truth – the gamers have voted with their cash. If they like an experience they're willing to keep investing in it, as long as each sequel is better than the last. It would seem they like the known. The negative of such a market is how the hardened business climate makes it much tougher for new IPs and new games to break through.

What's been the key to keeping the Battlefield franchise fresh for each sequel/spin-off?

Focusing on quality and adding the right amount of innovation to each game we make. We argue that as long as we stay true to the core of what our games have always been while also adding and polishing both what we and the players want, then the games we make will keep being well-received. And the occasional change of universe doesn't hurt either.

You recently told us DICE would love to work on other things as well as Battlefield in the future – how different is it to work on a new or unproven IP compared to an established franchise?

Working on a new IP holds a whole different set of challenges than working on something established. Just such a thing as not having an established fan base with opinions about the game changes how we'd approach it. But even if risk usually is much higher and there are more unknowns with a new game then this isn't something that will deter us from continuing to invest in brand-new ideas.

Indeed some sequels do seem to exist purely as shelf fodder. Another of last year's big games with '2' in the title was Valve's controversial *Left 4 Dead* follow-up – appearing exactly a year after the original, the game was met by much criticism following its E3 announcement. While it included numerous enhancements, the overall

Molecule has downplayed the chances of an out-and-out sequel to *LittleBigPlanet*, insisting that such a move would divide the community. "We'd never want to do that," Media Molecule level designer Danny Leaver said in November. "That'd be the most counterproductive thing you could do." The studio will continue to support the game with DLC. Meanwhile

Quantic Dream founder David Cage doesn't think a *Heavy Rain* sequel would work either, but the game will receive

One game generally felt not to need a sequel was 2K's outstanding BioShock

package certainly didn't offer anything that couldn't have been added via DLC. Regardless, reviews were positive, and a promised boycott failed to dent sales with *Left 4 Dead 2* selling 2 million copies in just its first two weeks on release.

Conversely, some developers are adamant that they will never sequelise their biggest IP, notably the studios behind two PlayStation exclusives. Media

some prequel DLC. "The game tells a full story, nothing is missing," said Cage. "I don't want to do a sequel because I've said what I had to say about these characters and this story. Honestly, I have nothing else to say." While Cage's integrity is admirable, should *Heavy Rain* prove successful, we're sure that Sony – and the game's fans – certainly wouldn't begrudge him going against his word.

YOUR SAY What's the best way to do a videogame sequel?

The best way to do a sequel is to try and keep it familiar yet fresh, and with new ideas. Is the gaming industry too reliant on franchises? Possibly but there are plenty of new games out there, without the hype that a franchise would get. So more people see the franchise games than the new IPs – **rbl007**

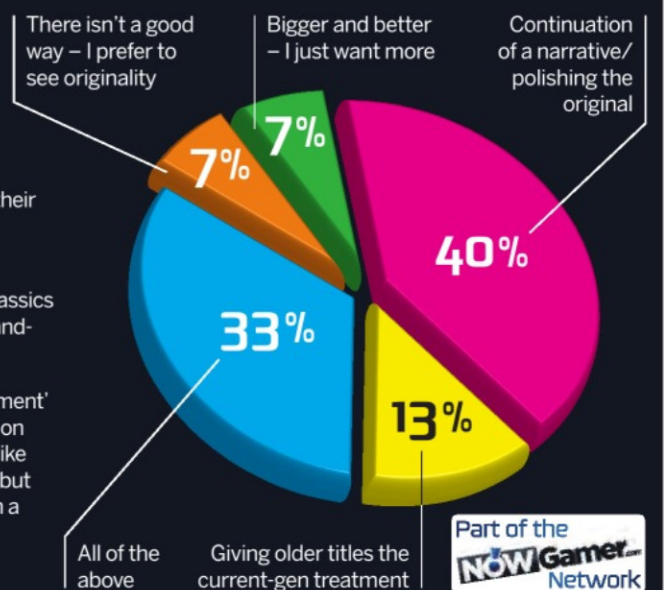
Continuing the narrative is something I personally enjoy. Whisper it, but I'm not a big *MW2* fan, even though I've prestiged twice so far. It doesn't help the storyline is so convoluted and full of nonsense. Opposite end of the spectrum – *Uncharted 2*. A genuinely fun storyline, you feel for the characters and once you've completed it, you just want more – **the bossman**

MW2 needed a better storyline. I like it when designers listen to their audience and improve their games by that – **skrudge7**

Well, I like all of the above. I like it when games continue storylines and when they re-release classics with better graphics and so on but I also like brand-new, fresh games like *LBP* – **kev schmit**

I chose 'Giving older titles the current-gen treatment' purely because there are so many great games on the PS2 and PSone that have been overlooked like *Alundra*. Sure, most people here have played it, but when I talk to my mates about it, they think I am a nutter or something – **supermarioex**

Join the Play Nation by signing up to our forum at www.play-mag.co.uk/forum



RE:PLAY



Uh-oh! The thorny subject of how best to go about reviewing games has reared its head again. Maybe we'd rather talk about embarrassing illnesses



This month's letters answered by:
Gavin Mackenzie,
Pile Driver

I have two personal hot topics in games at the moment. One is about *Heavy Rain*, the other is about *Modern Warfare 2*. I'm not going to discuss the *Heavy Rain* one here – I'm saving it up. The *MW2* issue is exactly what Kevin Wenzel describes in his Motherfukers! letter this month. It does my head in, not so much because of the impact it has on stats or on the match itself (I can always quit and find a match with no cheats) but because I cannot get my head around why people do it. Seriously, are their lives really that meaningless?

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● Message this man's
ego at your own risk.

Rettel Rats

I've not seen such backpedalling since the backwards cycle race in 'Sdrawkcab Town'!

I'm referring to your 'explanation' to why *PixelJunk Eden* got such a poor review score in last month's '£40 To Change Your Life' feature. Okay, so if this is the new theory and yardstick for reviewing games let's re-review *Bayonetta*. 10% probably won't like the button bashing, maybe 10% won't like the sauciness, perhaps 20% won't like the genre... Let's give it 60%, after all it is a bit of a 'Marmite' game.

This is more like the truth. The reviewer didn't get the game and its 'stupid' gameplay then when everyone else in the team and the public played it and thought actually this is pretty good, last month's disclaimer came into play.

It does make me wonder if things could be done differently, and if scores should be changed in hindsight. Games do age and maybe the score should change, too? With the excitement of a new console lots of games have been possibly scored too

highly. *Luigi's Mansion* for the GameCube, *Red Steel* for the Wii, and is *The Darkness* really a 91% game?

I think a new, more mature, clearer and modern rating of 1-10 should be used with 5 being average and 7 being good. This would allow games to age better, too. As a mostly adult mag I don't think we need to get tied up with 54s and 56s for example. It's a bit pointless. Also, while you are sitting there at home at night thinking 'I can't wait to get back to work' you could update all the other scores on the listings, too! Excellent!
Mark Baker, North Wales

A lot of good points there, Mark, but don't think for a moment that these very points, as well as many more along the same lines, haven't been deliberated, debated and on occasion physically fought over since the dawn of games journalism. The fact is that there simply isn't a perfect system for reviewing games and it's impossible to write a

Cage Fight

I was looking forward to *Heavy Rain* as I have followed David Cage's work for years and it has surpassed my expectations in every way. David has disregarded all modern concepts and conceits regarding gaming and constructed an interactive experience which is unlike any other and unashamedly designed for adults with adult themes, content and storytelling. In fact, it may well be one of the finest examples of storytelling I have come across in a long time.

I am sure he must have known this was a fine line to tread in the current climate but he has made something that is so utterly unique that it honestly has left me speechless. He has restored my faith that 'gaming' can be something special, something so uniquely interactive and involving that is unlike any other medium. *Heavy Rain* is the game I have been waiting for for years, intelligently written, sharp dialogue, wonderful vocal

performances, engaging and gorgeous visuals, dripping with atmosphere and all with the eye of a true cinematic vision.

The term 'next generation' is used all too often in gaming circles. Well, *Heavy Rain* is the definition of next generation. This is a bold piece of software to release at any time let alone with the mainstream media's current view on the inherent danger they believe our hobby possesses.

It is my sincere hope that *Heavy Rain* sells as well as it deserves so that 'gaming' can truly begin to be seen to be an art form in and of itself. David Cage has proved that it is genuinely possible to add depth and emotional impact to this hobby that we all love.

A fantastic accomplishment. I have been gaming for 30 years and he has showed me something completely new. A rare talent.

Niall Balmer, via email

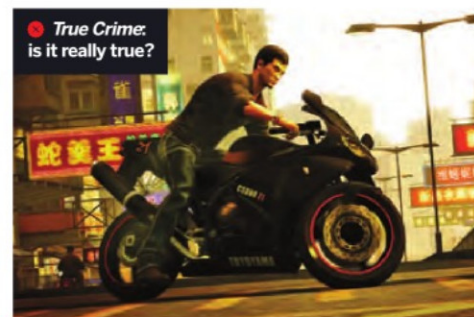
Following on from this month's star letter, what we have here is a prime example of an opinion that, while perfectly valid, some might find perfectly valid reasons to strongly disagree with it. Not naming any names, but turn to page 99 for a quite different view on *Heavy Rain*, arguably one of the hardest games to review objectively ever made.

★ STAR letter



It's only a fiver. Just buy it and make up your own mind.

review that everyone agrees with. Many games journalists would sooner do away with the headache of scores completely, but then most readers like them so we keep them. Basically, opinions on game review systems are even more varied and divisive than opinions on games themselves and chances are if we followed one of your suggestions we'd get a very angry letter from another reader who totally disagrees with you. Still, it's good to get your views on these things – have a free game.



This Much Is True

In recent years I think gaming has become much more mainstream. In doing this gaming franchises have arisen that are repetitive and offer little to no story, such as the *GH* and *Rock Band* series. Even *Call Of Duty* which is now, among teens, bought only for the online component. So is gaming, true gaming, dying among the youth of today? As I was playing *MW2* recently alongside browsing various websites I found some deals that surprised me. Games such as *BioShock* and *Dragon Age* were all heavily discounted, so I bought them, and I had a sudden realisation that in the past few years, *Call Of Duty* has drawn me away from true gaming led by stories, and the real enjoyment of gaming has been taken away. So isn't it time that the teenagers of this time actually pick up some *real* games and enjoy



Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game, courtesy of Capcom. For each letter we included this month, the sender wins a copy of Super Street Fighter IV, which is available now for the PS3 (£29.99).

STUPID letter



"Ooooooh! Me piles!"

Piles!

I was hoping that you could advise me about a problem I've developed.

I've got piles!

Since my days on the ZX Spectrum (showing my age), right up to the mighty PS3, I've been an avid gamer, and as you can imagine my piles have grown quite large. Now the missus has started complaining because they take up so much space.

Of course, I'm referring to my huge piles of videogames!

The problem is I can't resist a bargain and when it's a bargain game I have to get it. Sometimes I don't even bother playing the game – just knowing that it got a good score in *Play* and was a bargain price is enough, and I put it on the pile for a rainy day. The advice I need is, should I stop this habit now and play my backlog or should I carry on and move to a bigger house? Please help – time and space are running out!

Got to go – just seen *Bayonetta* half price online!

Dave Naisbett, Leek

Have you tried a high fibre diet?

gaming for something other than a seemingly satisfying headshot?

Richard Nelson (aged 16), Halifax

This one follows on from the last letter, too. We've never known our reader letters to align so neatly. Your point is interesting because to gamers of our generation (*Play*'s average age is 29) games *without* story that focus on pure gameplay are true games, because that's what all the best games were like up until... well, up until about when you were born. Ask people of our age what game best exemplifies 'true gaming' and the answer you'll hear most often is *Street Fighter*. It's *Heavy Rain*, the most story-led and gameplay-light game ever, that goes against what we would traditionally

F.A.Q.

I am getting annoyed by developers ruining games with sequels.

Aaron, via email

Buy more games that aren't sequels and more games that aren't sequels will be made.

How much better can games get? All I know it's bloody exciting.

Charlie Floyd, The North Pole

And that's proper swearing.

Your response to my question in issue 189 didn't make sense. Did it get left in from a previous letters page?

Shaun Izzard, Nanpantan

No, it shouldn't, and the only way to stop it is to avoid those games and avoid that DLC.

In a mere two minutes, I broke nearly £100 of stuff because of a CG helicopter.

Tom Watson, via email

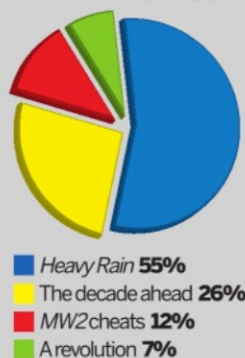
Labour MP Tom Watson told us he reads *Play*, and we were sceptical. We still are – this is probably Tom Watson, the veteran PGA golfer.

I hope you are all well at the office including all the PS3 consoles.

John Dormant, via email

Some of our PS3s were poorly on 1 March, but it was just a 24 hour thing.

THIS MONTH, YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...



PLAY GOPLAY
the forum...



The official Play and GoPlay magazine forum
The home of the UK's longest running and best PlayStation magazine

FAQ Search Memberlist Usergroups
Profile You have no new messages Log out [Tim]

Choice topics from the Play forum.
Join the discussion at www.play-mag.co.uk

SUBJECT: PLAY MAGAZINE DISCUSSION

Topic: God Of War III

Just wanted to say well done on the fantastic *God Of War III* feature. Also that Kratos pic of Nick Jones is pure class!!

foxeh

SUBJECT: HEADLINES

Topic: Final Fantasy XIII

Doesn't forumites sound silly, like we are all termites or something, but live off forums.

UberCool_UberGoff

SUBJECT: FIRST PLAY

Topic: ModNation Racers

Playing a beta is like fondling some breasts without nipples.

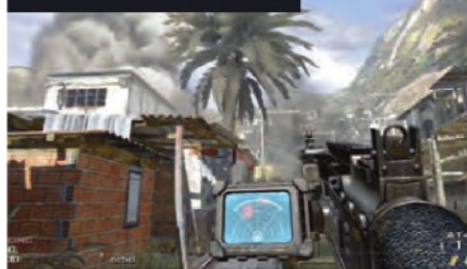
tedcurly

consider true gaming. But that doesn't mean that there aren't older gamers who don't appreciate story-driven games, of course – the previous letter writer being a handy case in point. In conclusion, there's no such thing as 'true gaming', just different games for different tastes. Now, true metal, on the other hand...

Mothernukers!

This is a call to all genuine players of *MW2* online. First of all let me say that I'm a massive fan of this online experience and you could even say that I'm slightly addicted to collecting titles, emblems and moving up the ranks. However, one thing has tarnished my favourite hobby. While playing Free For All and Team Deathmatch I became puzzled as to how some players can get 30 kills in a couple of minutes then finish the game with a tactical nuke. I was positive that some kind of cheat or glitch was being used but was dismayed when I discovered what was really occurring. I came across two players killing each other and wondered what was happening, then it finally clicked. These players were using tactical insertion then continuously killing the other when they respawned. I presume this is not what this perk is supposed to be used for. I therefore urge anyone who suspects this is happening when they're playing to stop

Who else is starting to wonder if it's worth it any more?



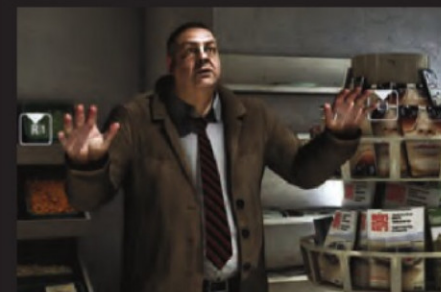
and hunt them down. I would appreciate you printing this letter so that anyone else who feels the same as me can join my campaign to eradicate the MOTHERNUKERS!

Kevin Wenzel, Peterhead

Oh Kevin, you've hit upon the thing that winds me up more than anything in *MW2*, and the reason (other than that I'm playing *Peggle* all the time instead) I'm not playing it as much as I did. I already wrote a very tearful blog about it on our website (www.play-mag.co.uk/opinion/modern-warfare-2-freedom-isn't-free-for-all). But yeah, you're right. We should hunt them down and drive them away, but more than that, *Infinity Ward* needs to step in and stop this from happening.

The BURNING issues

The stuff we want to hear about!



- 1 What are your thoughts on Play's review system? Does it need a change?
- 2 What's the longest it has taken you to get around to playing a game after buying it?
- 3 Could *Heavy Rain* be a launch pad for better storytelling across all games?

▶ the big story ◀◀

真犯罪

It's one of the safest cities in the world, so it might come as some surprise that the new True Crime title is being developed in Vancouver. We travelled out to the west coast of Canada to get some idea of how the game is turning out



The announcement of the next stage in the *True Crime* series took many by surprise – it was a more or less a forgotten series and one that, bar a few positive reviews for the first game, *Streets Of LA*, didn't actually score too well across the board. Stephen van der Mescht, executive producer of the newest title in the series, had a pretty solid idea as to why this particular game would be revisited: "There's a lot of people that don't actually know this: it's the second-best [selling] open-world game out there. The first *True Crime* actually sold about 4.8 million copies." With this in mind, it's easy to see why Activision decided a return to the series would be a good idea.

The *True Crime* of 2010 is related to its forbears only by name and general setting – there is no continuing storyline or reference to past titles made in this third entry to the series. This was a conscious decision on the part of developer United Front Games, who opted to make *True Crime* a complete reboot, as van der Mescht put it "taking it back to its base level". The lead character, Wei Shen, is an undercover cop just as the leads in the past two titles were. This time around players are infiltrating a Triad group in Hong Kong, attempting to bring them down from the inside. It won't be a simple case of get in there and blow the whole thing up, though, and we're promised the subterfuge and intrigue will stretch further than just pretending to be a bad guy. Aside from the undercover element and the open-world setting, the similarities end there, with United Front keen to stamp its own identity on the game.

Identity plays a key theme in *True Crime*, with the background of Hong Kong being described by the developer as "the most important character in the game". When it comes to portraying the island, United Front opted against what has come before in the series and didn't create a replica of the city it is based in. Instead it decided to make an adapted facsimile of the area, maintaining its feel and the general areas in and around the city, but keeping things far enough away from reality that they're still fun to play. That's not to say it isn't accurate in any

way, however, with the team taking pains to effectively reproduce the general look and feel of Hong Kong – around 27,000 photos of the city were taken for research and numerous visits undertaken in order to make sure what they were making wasn't just a Westerners' view of what goes on in the East. From what we were shown, it certainly looks the part: dense and cramped in parts, open and modern in others and quaint as you might expect elsewhere.

There are four main areas to the map, with each modelled on a real-life version of regions in Hong Kong and each with a distinctive look, feel and – as the developer was keen to stress – playing style. In the hustle and bustle of North Point, for example, players will have to make full use of the game's free running system in order to navigate the cluttered, dense, labyrinthine streets. Head to the more commercial Central District – which we were lucky enough to have an exclusive demonstration of – and you will see far more open spaces, cleaner areas and architecture of a Victorian style, befitting the area's former owners – the British. This whole

PLAYERS HAVE TO INFILTRATE A TRIAD GROUP IN HONG KONG

area looks far more space age (with the odd temple thrown in) and generally less alien to Western eyes than the more traditional HK settings elsewhere on the map. Aside from this, it was used as an example of how where you are affects how you play the game. In the Central District region there is a network of tunnels leading from building to building, suspended in the air above the streets. What this seemingly insignificant point means is that instead of the street-based hustle and bustle of areas like North Point, navigation through the Central District can be undertaken in a totally different way. While it may seem like a tiny point – and don't misunderstand: we don't think this is a game-changer, more a nice touch – it really should affect how you play the game. We were also exclusively shown the areas of Aberdeen and Kennedy Town, and we have to give props where they're due: United Front really has

CRIME TIME

Some of the best crime flicks from Hong Kong

Police Story (警察故事)

Director: Jackie Chan
Released: 1985
Available: DVD from E1 Entertainment

Jackie Chan considers *Police Story* to be his best movie in terms of action, so who are we to disagree. It's got all the staples of a classic Chan film with plenty of outrageous moves and slapstick comedy mixed right into the fighting set pieces. Chan famously suffered second-degree burns to his hands performing one stunt.



A Better Tomorrow (英雄本色)

Director: John Woo
Released: 1986
Available: DVD from Optimum Home Entertainment

Our list wouldn't be complete without a little bit of John Woo who more or less defines Hong Kong action films. This won't be the only appearance of Chow Yun-Fat, though, as he's appeared in virtually every movie from the region in the last three decades. In this he plays a Triad trying to put his past behind him.



Full Contact (俠盜高飛)

Director: Ringo Lam
Released: 1993
Available: DVD from Contender Entertainment Group

Ringo Lam is another name synonymous with Hong Kong action, although this movie did better abroad in the US and UK than it did in his homeland. It follows the trials of Chow Yun-Fat's hood as he attempts to fight off the attentions of a bloodthirsty loan shark and keep his brother alive.



Infernal Affairs (無間道)

Director: Andrew Lau and Alan Mak
Released: 2002
Available: DVD from Palisades Tartan

Widely believed to be one of the best movies ever to come out of Hong Kong, *Infernal Affairs* follows a Triad who has infiltrated the police (Andy Lau) and a cop undercover with the Triads (Tony Leung) as each is tasked with looking for themselves. It was remade as *The Departed* by Martin Scorsese in 2006.



Election (黑社會)

Director: Johnnie To
Released: 2005
Available: DVD From Optimum Home Entertainment

If *Infernal Affairs* was Hong Kong's combination of *Serpico* and *Goodfellas* then *Election* was its *Godfather*. Not to be confused with the Reese Witherspoon movie of the same name, *Election* looks at the inner workings of a Triad 'family' as a new leader is elected and recriminations begin to spill out into the streets.



> created a tangibly different feel for each area. Even seemingly subtle things like lighting – which is different depending on which region you're in – helps to make everywhere you visit something unique. While we weren't able to get an exact figure on the size of the game, art director Josh Lee informed us that the playable area is "quite huge". With the Hong Kong of *True Crime* not being an exact replica of the real thing, it has given the team licence to make the city fit into the mould of a game more than the real thing would. While they are still keen to emphasise the 'density' of the city – which is more than evident just by looking at the streets – it has taken them a lot of effort to make sure there is a balance between this bustling, realistic Hong Kong feel and a game that's still fun to play. As Lee informed us: "We had to make a lot of – I wouldn't say compromises – but concessions for gameplay, particularly for things like driving." He went on: "We need wider streets than

you'd actually have... all things considered I think we were able to strike a balance because we were able to compensate." This willingness to avoid the rather unnecessary 'accuracy over fun' of the previous games can surely only help the latest *True Crime*, at least in our opinion.

There are inevitable comparisons to *GTA*, not least down to the look of the game. A standard, third-person viewpoint, a map/energy bar in the bottom corner and waypoints marked on your screen aren't the kind of thing to help the casual observer make any distinctions between *True Crime* and its competitors. But this is an area that the developer is keen to tackle: it may look similar, it certainly isn't the same. United Front is aiming for five core concepts that it is – so it told us – keeping in mind when it comes to every aspect of the game. First up is the

undercover-cop angle: the fact that the story isn't about a quest for glory, gaining territory or earning money – it's about bringing down a crime syndicate. Second is the gameplay: the developer wants to create as realistic a world as possible while not drowning it in too much reality, keeping things flowing and fun to play with a cinematic, over-the-top edge. Third is something we mentioned before, with Hong Kong itself playing the most important role, and all the areas needing to have a distinctive, interesting character. Fourth is the driving, which aside from being more arcadey, has been tuned to make motorbikes more useful and less treacherous than in other games. Finally, there is the social system of 'Face', and the ability to talk to anyone you might run across.

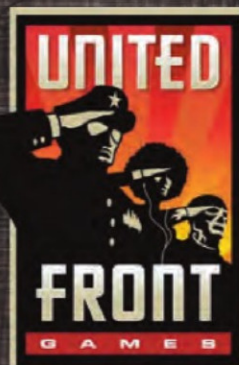
Previous *True Crime* titles handled morality in a standard fashion: a meter measured your actions and you gained 'goodie points' for actions that reflected your police background

FACE REACTS TO PLAYER DECISIONS

and 'baddie points' when you did something un-cop-like, such as shooting a pedestrian in the face. It worked well enough and opened the games up to multiple routes as the lead characters were drawn down a path that reacted to how they behaved. This *True Crime* has dropped the system, instead opting for a more linear, cinematic style. While this choice won't please some, the fact that the first game had players fighting floating, flaming dragon heads means we're not too opposed to a more focused, grounded approach when it comes to a story and actions. You're still expected to behave like a member of the police, and will be duly punished should you decide that you want to get involved in a life of crime – and the police aren't afraid of getting involved should you step out of line. But it is the introduction of the Face >



● Heavily influenced by Hong Kong movies, *True Crime* promises to be incredibly cinematic.



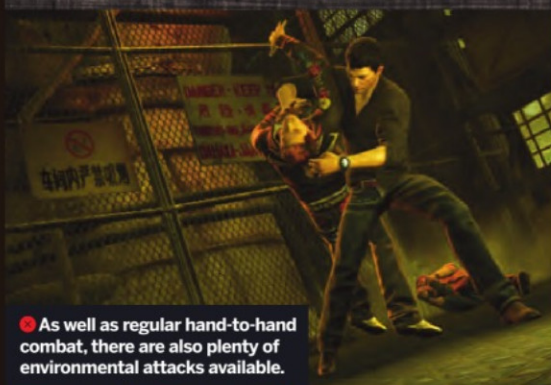
TOGETHER AT LAST

Who are United Front Games?

IF YOU HAVEN'T heard of United Front Games we'd be disappointed, but not really surprised. The developer is based in Vancouver and was founded in 2007 by former game makers at EA, Radical Entertainment and Rockstar and now includes talent with credits as diverse as *The Godfather*, *Spore*, *Bully* and *Skate*. The reason we would be disappointed if you haven't heard of it is because United Front's first game is going to be PS3 and PSP-exclusive *ModNation Racers*, which you should have heard of by now. However, all its experienced personnel from the likes of *The Godfather* and *Need For Speed* will be needed to make *True Crime* tick.

➤ system that interested us the most when talking about how the game plays out and how the player can influence it. Rather than a simple substitute or re-branding of the moral systems from past games, Face is a new construct. Based on social norms in the real Hong Kong, Face reacts to player decisions, how they dress, what they're driving and many other factors, and represents the social standing of the character within the game world. An example was described to us along these lines: the player needs to get into a nightclub, so they change into some expensive clothes and obtain a flashy car. By doing this, Face levels are raised – and once they're high enough, he can suitably impress the bouncer enough to allow him instant, free access. Alternatively, he could just pay for a ticket, but this wouldn't give a substantial Face boost. Another option would be for him to level up his Face using other methods and spend it intimidating his way into the club. It certainly sounds like an interesting, flexible system when it comes to elements like this, but in the normal game it translates to a special power bar. Filling it up enough allows activation of things like a marksman mode (hello, bullet time) and self-healing. So not only can it be used in interesting, story-related ways, the mechanic serves as a more standard addition that would be expected of most games of its ilk.

Mike Shupa, lead designer of the game, gave us his opinion of the moral choices to be made in *True Crime*: "The thing about the undercover-cop story is that the morality is very grey – it isn't black and white. So by that being one of the main themes of the game, we didn't want to have the player go down a different route and have the character change based on that." He went on: "But there definitely are a lot of ways that you can express your moral choices in the gameplay – your Face is impacted by those more day-to-day moral choices." But the gritty, mature feel of the game would surely preclude the ability to play through *True Crime* as a heroic do-gooder, right? "You can't play as a saint ➤



● As well as regular hand-to-hand combat, there are also plenty of environmental attacks available.



● Gunplay can be simple and functional or completely over the top.



> – it's impossible to [be an undercover cop] and a saint at the same time," Shupa explained.

The influences for the third *True Crime* are pretty obvious when you think about them: Hong Kong cinema classics like the *Infernal Affairs* trilogy and the *Triad Election* series have had a huge impact on the way the game has turned out. From the basic setting, through the motives and actions of each character to the fact that the main characters – whether they commit good or bad actions – are viewed in a sympathetic light by the audience, everything has been studied in detail to make sure it hits the right notes. Moving away from the more obvious Eastern influences were those of the West – though also expected in their own right – Scorsese's remake of *Infernal Affairs*, *The Departed*, was name-checked numerous times and *The Wire* came into play as it has to these days when you're talking about anything police-based and dramatic. Away from these more expected influences and research elements, however, came something we didn't expect to hear: one employee of United Front (who remained unnamed to us) was in contact with a number of people who they talked to in order to get a better idea of the subject matter – Triads,

We were shown the same demo that was presented at GDC, but thanks to the nature of *True Crime* it was suitably different from what we've seen before. Obviously the core components remained the same – an opening cut-scene with placeholder dialogue, a drive to a warehouse and a battle inside the building – but how you approach the actual assault is up to you. What we were shown in Vancouver looked rather impressive – it's hard to judge the driving based purely on watching the game, but we were promised the experience of those who worked on previous *Need For Speed* games had been implemented to its fullest extent. As such, expect some fun, arcade handling that eschews this silly little 'simulation' thing that seems so popular. The combat, however, raised some eyebrows for all the right reasons. Sneaking his way into the warehouse (set on tracking down the boss of a rival Triad gang, natch), Wei took out the first guard silently, before entering the building and kicking some ass. Hand-to-hand combat in other sandbox games tends to take a backseat, but *True Crime* sees it very much in the driver's position. Motion-captured work from some top martial arts mo-cap actors has been implemented into a system that

plays out a lot like *Batman: Arkham Asylum*. It may be a lazy comparison, but it's not exactly a harmful one as we have fond memories of that

particular battering style. All of the punches, throws and spin-kicks were nicely punctuated with some rather brutal environmental attacks – smashing faces into tables, hitting enemies with the door of a fridge and other such violent hilarity. These additional attacks can be carried out anywhere in the world, so long as there are requisite items lying around. Gunplay was another area where it was easy to see what might and might not be so great about it. To get our concerns out of the way first, it's easy to look at *True Crime* and think it's just another lock-on, cover-based third-person shooting system that we've all seen before. With the negatives out of the way, on to what did

CLASSIC HONG KONG CINEMA IS A MAJOR INFLUENCE

ex-criminals and a retired undercover cop were all mentioned as being sources of information for what is being put into the game. This level of commitment to detail isn't just impressive – in this case it's downright brave, as talking to gangsters only ever is. As lead producer Jeff O'Connell told us: "I think there's a certain disbelief that a bunch of videogame developers from Vancouver would end up talking with ex-police officers who were very high up in an undercover organisation or ex-Triad members. But we've been at this for two and a half years and we've taken special care to develop contacts over that period, to gain their trust and work with them – we're very lucky with that."



● Hand-to-hand combat plays a much bigger role in *True Crime* than in many of its competitors.

● Vehicle mechanics have been handled by staffers who've worked on the *Need For Speed* series.



● Although not completely accurate, the Hong Kong locales look incredibly authentic.



TRUE CRIME DNA What makes True Crime tick?



Third-Person Action – GTA series

The influence of Rockstar's crime drama series has been felt throughout the games industry, but *True Crime* was one of the first to follow in its footsteps. Now it's trying to forge a path for itself.



Game World – Stranglehold

Both set in Hong Kong, *John Woo Presents Stranglehold* was considered by many to be lacking in terms of gameplay breadth and scope, but no one complained about how beautiful the city looked.



Driving – Need For Speed

General manager of United Front Games Stefan Wessels was once producer of *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit* and *True Crime* promises to have some rather exciting and action-packed driving mechanics.



Hand-To-Hand Combat – Batman: Arkham Asylum

With its plethora of counters and bone-crunching finishing moves *True Crime* definitely seems to be taking a page from the Dark Knight's book of law-enforcement techniques.



Air-Jacking – Just Cause

A favourite feature of this sandbox adventure, apart from its open-ended gameplay, was the ability to jump from vehicle to vehicle before taking one over. *True Crime* features a similar mechanic.



Revamp – Star Trek (2009)

Apparently United Front took a great deal of inspiration from JJ Abrams' *Star Trek* reboot as its shift in tone is exactly what the developer wants to achieve as it moves away from *True Crime*'s past.



Hero – True Crime: Streets Of LA

Much like the first game in this series the lead character of this reboot is a Chinese-American, only this time Detective Wei Shen has moved to Hong Kong and is going undercover to fight the Triads.



● Wei Shen is an undercover cop tasked with taking down a Triad gang.



● Wei Shen sure knows how to kick ass.



> impress: the developer is pushing for a far more cinematic feel to every aspect of the game, and gunplay (along with melee combat) is no different: slow motion, diving ridiculousness, context-sensitive damage that ties into your moral code (use non-lethal takedowns wherever possible, just like a real undercover cop probably would) and other such elements take the gunplay from simple and functional into the realms of over the top and fun.

While the proof won't actually be with us until we get to play the finished product, it does seem that there are many ways in which to tackle things and the player is actually encouraged to use all approaches presented to them. As Shupa told us: "There's definitely a lot of freedom in [how you approach missions]. You'll basically need to use all the different gameplay styles in order to progress." It can only bode well for the game if the missions are not only varied, but open to individual interpretations. An interesting element mentioned to us by van der Mescht was that of 'cases': side missions that can involve more traditional police activities such as surveillance, bug planting and other dangerous pursuits. It's not a major aspect of the game, but could easily be a fine distraction.

Helping lend credibility to the triple-A status of *True Crime* is a stellar voice cast of names related to Hong Kong cinema. United Front is keen to keep things as authentic as it can in this respect and... well, this is all it told us, unfortunately, as during the visit it wasn't able to reveal to us who was on board. The same applied to the music; though we were informed it would be a mixture of licensed tracks and specifically scored music, and that it would appeal to "most tastes".

There's still a lot of work to be done and the latest *True Crime* has a hell of a lot to live up to in its contemporaries (well, one *GTA*-shaped contemporary in particular). The combination of experience (the combined portfolio of the developers working for the company includes entries in the *Need For Speed* series, *Prototype* and *Canis Canem Edit*, among others), a clearly defined vision and some deeper in-game elements than we are normally used to in sandbox titles is a great start on paper. Whether United Front can pull it off, however, is another matter altogether. But, as van der Mescht told us: "You may fire it up as just an open-world game, but the minute you start playing it'll be 'holy shit - this really feels different'."

THE RAP SHEET

A quick history of the True Crime series



TRUE CRIME IS the third game in an ongoing series from Activision that began with *True Crime: Streets Of LA*, which was developed by Luxoflux. It was one of the first games to ride on the post-*GTA III* buzz with similar open-world, exploration and crime themes when it was released in 2003. The game followed Nick Kang, an LA cop returning from suspension and thought by many to be uncontrollable. This sets up a 'good cop, bad cop' system in which your behaviour in the game is recorded and ranked. Do too many bad things and you're booted from the force and you'll have to do some good deeds to get back into the LAPD's good books again.

Luxoflux followed it up with *True Crime: New York City* in 2005, this time following the trials of a reformed gang member trying to make it in the NYPD. Marcus Reed is taken under the wing of an old friend of his father's in the precinct only to see him betrayed and murdered. He then works with the FBI to find the mole who manufactured his friend's death. The good cop, bad cop system returns, but this game's key selling point was an accurate re-creation of Manhattan. It was not received as well as the original, though, suffering from some technical difficulties with regards to frame rate and physics.

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PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



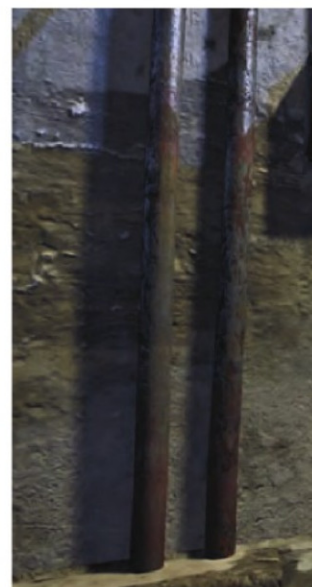
QUAD OF WAR

ATVs, Apaches and everything in-between

THERE WILL BE a plentiful supply of vehicles to ride, drive and pilot in *Medal Of Honor*, some of which will be 'on rails' sections while others will be fully driveable, much like...er... *Modern Warfare 2* then. Unlike *Modern Warfare 2*, though, vehicles are also expected to be driveable in multiplayer. Obviously, vehicles play a big part in DICE's *Battlefield* games, too, but we don't know whether or not battles in *Medal Of Honor* are going to be on that sort of scale.



These early screens tell us that EALA is going for moody and atmospheric rather than OTT and *Bond*-esque.



While EALA is keen not to overdo it, it's still an action game, so expect a lot of stuff to get blown up.





RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

You'll be playing as an elite for most of the game, but will sometimes switch to frontline troops.

Medal Of Honor

Taking Kabul by the horns



Bin Laden almost certainly isn't in this house, but you've always got to check.



In possibly the most predictable shift in focus the games industry has ever seen, the *Medal Of Honor* series has gone modern. EA has offered its own reason for this about turn, and there may be some truth in this, but the most compelling reason is obvious to anyone with a brain – 30 million-plus sales of *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare* titles.

But we shouldn't assume that such blatant bandwagon jumping will result in an inferior product. This is 'new EA' we're talking about and imitating other companies' ideas *really* well is what new EA is all about. The *Dead Space* of

EALA stating that it will be avoiding any exploration of the rights and wrongs of war in Afghanistan, where the game is set, instead focusing on the personal stories of men directly involved. These are fictional stories, but they're based closely on the details of first-hand accounts offered by operatives who were there. In fact, EALA claims that some sort of chance encounter between a member of its team and a real-life Tier 1 Warfighter who had served in Afghanistan was the main motivation behind *Medal Of Honor's* shift to the present day. We're still not sold on *that* claim, but it is

interesting that the game is based on the first-hand accounts of elite operatives.

In fact, these

consultants actually have veto over what does and does not go into the game. A whole chunk of the campaign already had to be taken out because a consultant was of the opinion that, while they'd done it well, EALA did not have the *right* to tell that story. You don't argue with elite soldiers.

The impression we get is that this right to veto isn't simply a clause in some contract, though. EALA is keen to emphasise that *Medal Of Honor* is being made with 'respect for the

soldier' in mind. We're not sure if that can be maintained 100 per cent when it needs to be counterbalanced with fun and entertainment, but if we get some soldiers who aren't hateful, bloodthirsty thugs then it'll be a step-up from most games of this ilk. It'll be interesting to see if and how enemy soldiers are represented respectfully. Taliban combatants might be fighting for an ideology at odds with that of most of us, but they're ultimately no less brave or dedicated than the soldiers of America or its allies.

So we're optimistic about *Medal Of Honor's* chances of topping *MW2's* single-player campaign – although a lot will still depend on level design, AI, controls and so on – but loosening Infinity Ward's grip on the audience for online modern combat shooting is going to be tough. If anyone can do it, though, it's DICE, creator of the *Battlefield* series, who will handle the multiplayer half of the game while EALA focuses on the single-player. Clearly EA means business and, with recent events making the future of the *Modern Warfare* franchise look a teeny bit wobbly for the first time ever, this might be the perfect time to strike.

Medal Of Honor is being developed by EALA. Check the website for more details: www.medalofhonor.com

Clearly EA means business with Medal Of Honor

modern-day war FPSs? Don't mind if we do. And besides, *Call Of Duty* was highly derivative of the *Medal Of Honor* series in the first place, so what goes around comes around, and all that.

We also think it's worth noting that *MW2's* single-player campaign was disappointing and left us wanting something that offered a strong, believable account of the experiences of personnel on the ground, just as *Call Of Duty 4* had. *Medal Of Honor* is shaping up to be just that, with

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Narrative focus on the soldiers' stories, not on war as a whole.
- Combined effort between two leading studios – EALA and, creator of *Battlefield*, DICE.
- Based on the experiences of real-life, elite Tier 1 Warfighter operatives.
- Telling the stories of soldiers in Afghanistan before any movie does it first.

READ ME

Medal Of Honor is set shortly before the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan in late 2001, so its warfare isn't actually all that modern after all.

PREVIEW



It's not *Mirror's Edge* or *Stranglehold* or anything, but your ghost is still pretty nimble.



In the future, heavy weapons won't even be heavy.



The drone is now a playable class in multiplayer, which sounds like fun.



You look like you've seen a ghost. Because you have. Because this is one.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

A blast from the future



This once peaceful village now appears to be home to a makeshift missile base.



Tom Clancy's branded games have a long, long history, dating back to the original *Rainbow Six* in 1998. The brand was a huge success on the PC, receiving acclaim for its realism and its tactical, slow-paced, tense gameplay. For a long time, console versions of Tom Clancy games weren't up to scratch, particularly for PlayStation owners, and it's only really with this generation that consoles have caught up with the Tom Clancy brand, which has now diversified beyond tactical shooters to real-time strategy (*EndWar*) and flight simulation (*H.A.W.X.*).

The tactical shooters we've seen on PlayStation 3 – namely *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* and both *Rainbow Six Vegas* titles – aren't as focused on planning and strategy as their PC forebears, but they are still about making cautious, systematic progress. The *Ghost Recon* franchise in particular, as its name suggests, is all about spotting and taking down your enemy before they even know you're there. This makes for some tense, believable and sometimes very satisfying action, but it could feel a bit clunky, almost *too* systematic sometimes. It's good to know then that *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier* is heading

very much in a less clunky direction and, as luck would have it, so is real-life warfare.

Future Soldier is set about ten to 15 years from now, but one key change from the conventions of the *Ghost Recon* series, and perhaps also the most surprising one, actually already applies to special operations in the present day – you don't give orders to your squad any more. This has little to do with futuristic technology and everything to do with contemporary spec ops training methods. These guys are so well trained that, for the most part, they don't need to be told what to do. Sure, they still



● Drones don't just carry gear and spot enemies now. They provide cover and even do their share of killing.

get a mission brief and there are no doubt some situations where squad leaders will need to make decisions, but generally when a squad is on operations, each man knows exactly what his role is and the squad moves as a unit with very little talking, pointing or waving required.

There'll be a lot less shooting at distant red outlines, and a lot more close-range ambushes and fluid, high-mobility combat

Apart from being an interesting fact, this has a number of implications for *Future Soldier*. On the one hand, you don't get the clunkiness of issuing orders that they'll probably get wrong anyway. On the other, the AI is going to have to be really good to be able to seamlessly move as a unit with you,

the player, who, almost certainly, has no spec ops training. Giving orders could be a bit tedious in the *GRAV* games, but could also be a godsend should your squad get confused or stuck. We're also a bit worried about what this means for our favourite tactic – sending our squad out in

front to lure out ambushes and snipers – but we always felt a little guilty about that anyway.

The other two major changes are based on technology and also have a significant impact on gameplay. The soldier of the future is much more mobile and a lot less visible than his present-day counterpart.

His clothing is augmented both by optical camouflage and a powered exoskeleton. The camo uses camera and projectors to make him look like his surroundings so that his silhouette is harder to see and the exoskeleton helps bear the 130lb burden of his equipment so that he can move faster and further for longer. The combined result of this tech is that 'ghosts' can and will get much more up close and personal than before, so there'll be a lot less shooting at distant red outlines, and a lot more close-range ambushes and fluid, high-mobility combat. Sounds like exactly what the series needs to us.

Ghost Recon: Future Soldier is being developed by Ubisoft Paris and Red Storm Entertainment. Check the website for more details: <http://ghostrecon.uk.ubi.com>

ADVANCED STORYTELLER

There's Norway this could happen for real

STORY AND SETTING details are scant at the moment, but we do know that it all kicks off when an ultranationalist group deposes the Russian president by staging a coup. This sparks conflict on a large scale and your job is to track down whoever it was that staged the coup and nip the whole situation in the bud before it becomes a threat to global security and all that sort of thing. For some reason you end up in Norway, fighting most of your battles in rain and/or snow, so the weather effects team will have its work cut out.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- More fluid and faster paced than previous *Ghost Recon* titles.
- You get the opportunity to sample the military toys of the near-future.
- Ubisoft has put the combined forces of two major studios to work on it.
- A more realistic alternative to *Modern Warfare 2*.

READ ME

Most of the technology seen in the *Advanced Warfighter* series is now commonly used in real life, which is why Ubisoft has jumped a little further into the future this time.

PREVIEW



● Encounters with geckos were common in *Fallout 2*. Hunting them for pelts was a good source of income.



● The Nightkin are Supermutants that can turn invisible.



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Fallout: New Vegas

Are you gambling with your future?

I've played all of that *Fallout 3* DLC and I was mostly disappointed. Is *New Vegas* just another half-hearted stringing out of *Fallout*'s good name?

We don't think so, although it's a little early to be absolutely sure. The problem with *Fallout 3*'s DLC was that, being episodic, it was linear and narrow, which went against what *Fallout 3* was really about, and meant it didn't integrate very well with the main game. *New Vegas*, though, is a completely new game, with a completely new post-apocalyptic wasteland to explore.

Oh yeah, 'cos wastelands are all so different...

This one is actually. In the *Fallout* story, the western United States weren't as badly affected by the war as the east, so this wasteland isn't so... wasted. There's greenery and proper newly built buildings that aren't ramshackle semi-ruins.

If it's a proper new game, why isn't it called *Fallout 4*?

Bethesda is taking much the same approach Rockstar did with the *Grand Theft Auto* series when it followed *GTA III* with *Vice City* and *San Andreas* before making *GTA IV*

for a new generation of hardware, so don't expect a *Fallout 4* until the PlayStation 4. In the meantime, though, there's going to be at least one more *Fallout* on the PS3 that uses the same engine and mostly the same gameplay style and similar structure as *Fallout 3*.

But Bethesda's not even developing this in-house, is it?

That's true, but it's not getting farmed out to any old hack developer either. Obsidian was formed by key members of the studio that created the *Fallout* series in the first place, so some of the people who made *Fallout* and *Fallout 2* are heading up this project. Since forming Obsidian they've produced *Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic II* and *Neverwinter Nights 2* and, going further back, their CVs are littered with classic PC RPGs like *Planescape: Torment* and *Baldur's Gate*. So yeah, *New Vegas* is in very safe hands.

Is it likely to be different to *Fallout 3* then?

Not that different – it's still a free-roaming, first-person, post-apocalyptic action-RPG that uses the same technology as *Fallout 3* – it's not going back to 2D or anything like that. But what is interesting about *New Vegas* is that nearly all of the things so far cited as being different to *Fallout 3* are throwbacks to *Fallout* and *Fallout 2*. Most intriguing of these is the reputation system, which works alongside karma. It effectively 'localises' other characters' reactions to your actions so that if you do something wrong in one town you'd get a hostile reaction there, but not anywhere else. You might even find that the inhabitants of a nearby rival town get friendlier. In the original *Fallout* games, this system was even tied into the games' multi-path stories, which was what made them so ambitious and so awesome, but was also their undoing.

● Look at all that blue sky! And yes, there's a dinosaur, but it's not real, so whatever.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's a *Fallout* game, and *Fallout* games are great. Except for that rubbish one.
- Many key members of Obsidian's team worked on the first two *Fallout* games.

- Humorous and quirky, and less bleak than *Fallout 3*.
- Hardcore makes survival more gruelling and realistic.



● New Vegas features twice as many guns as *Fallout 3*, including this grenade machine gun.

How do you mean?

When it worked, the knock-on effect that your actions had in the old *Fallout* games was ingenious, and really made it feel like your story. When it worked. Unfortunately, you're unlikely to meet a long-time *Fallout* fan who doesn't have a sorry tale about the reputation system getting its wires crossed and causing something totally illogical, and even game-breaking, to happen.

Sounds like it will be awesome if it works, though...

Absolutely. And it ought to be easier to do with the better technology, higher budget and bigger team available to Obsidian now. Plus we imagine Bethesda will be operating tight quality control now that *Fallout* has gone from a cult-classic to mainstream hit.

Fallout: New Vegas is being developed by Obsidian Entertainment. Check the website for more details: www.obsidianent.com

READ ME

Did your companions keep getting lost and killed when you were playing *Fallout 3*? Fret not, you can issue specific instructions to them in *Fallout: New Vegas*.



● You can now perform special moves in melee combat, including this one, which is called Fore!

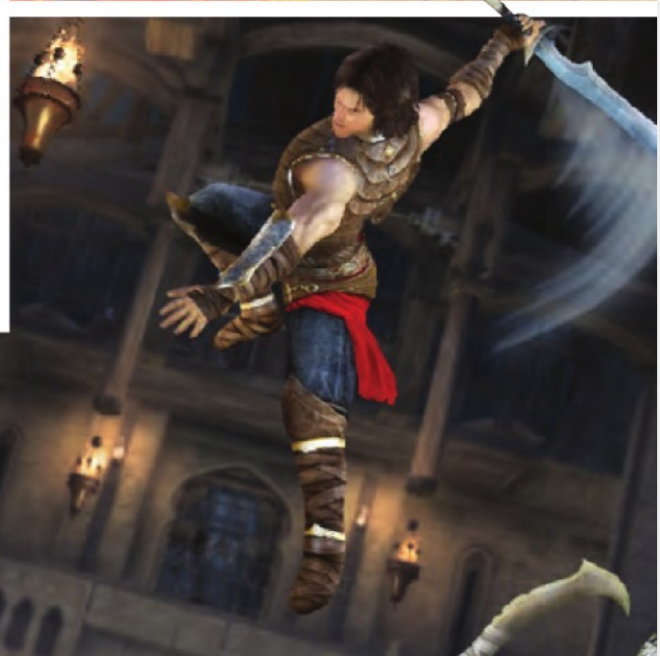


LAUGHING AT TRAGEDY

Expect more post-apocalyptic laughs and japes

WHILE THERE'S UNDOUBTEDLY a thick vein of black humour and dark irony in *Fallout 3*, it's a much bleaker, less tongue-in-cheek game than its predecessors. It can even get depressing at times. Obsidian has stated that it aims to re-create the jokier, more overtly satirical tone of the original games in *New Vegas* and, judging by this transvestite Supermutant called Tabitha, it's already well on the way.

PREVIEW



INTERVIEW

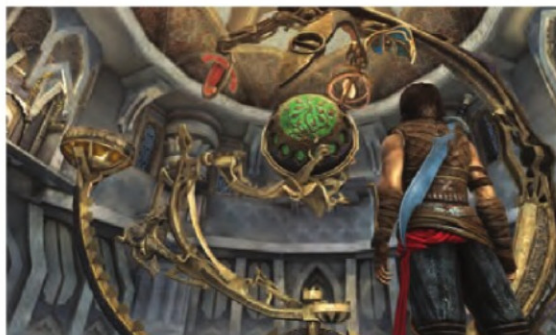
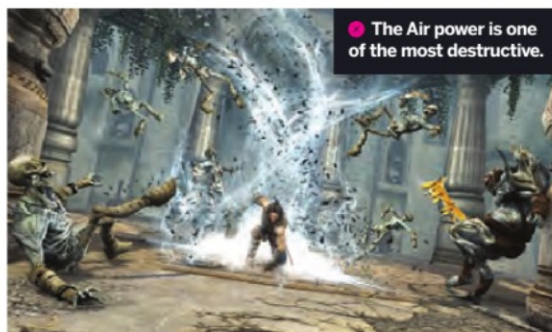
Jan-Erik Sjövall, animation director of *Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands*

Is there any relation at all between the *Forgotten Sands* and *The Sands Of Time* movie?

Jordan Mechner is the connecting loop between the two parts, he created the franchise, he worked on *Sands Of Time* with Ubisoft and he's gone on to work on the movie. Disney is really making a new franchise in the style of the *Pirates Of The Caribbean* movies, but we have nothing to do with it. They based the movie on the game and we based the game on our game.

Is there any concern that that's going to cause some confusion?

That's the internal joke on the development team that we're the game to the movie that's about the game and we're not the game about the movie. It is confusing and it was confusing internally. 'Are you the game for the movie?' and we'd have to explain that we're not. When we were hiring people didn't understand what was going on. It is the 'midquel', you are the Prince from *Sands Of Time* and *Warrior Within*. I would go as far as to say that if I look at Jake Gyllenhaal and his costume the art direction is taken from *Warrior Within*, so we leaned on our own art direction rather than ripping someone else's art direction off. I wouldn't go so far as to say they did that, of course.



FIRST PLAY



RELEASE DATE: MAY

Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands

Ubisoft is turning back the clock with this new adventure

The game for the movie of the game? Not really. There's still a lot of confusion surrounding *Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands* as Ubisoft is probably only too aware of. A silver-screen interpretation of *The Sands Of Time* is imminent and *The Forgotten Sands* is in no way a tie-in to that film. Neither is it a replacement for or any kind of sequel to 2008's *Prince Of Persia* 'reboot'. Ubisoft insists that the timing with the movie is beneficial, but that the game remains a sequel to the original *Sands Of Time* game (it's also being called a 'midquel' as it sits between *TSOT* and *Warrior Within*). Neither does it end the publisher's interest in its alternate Prince timeline or stand as any admission that the reboot failed. No, this is just another *POP* game.

That's a good thing, though, especially for long-time fans of the series. Those less familiar with the series prior to 2008 may also look forward to *The Forgotten Sands* as our hands-on time with the game revealed that this is a genuine *POP*

game. Playing it took us back to the days of the original *Sands Trilogy* and the superbly challenging and involving gameplay they gave us. *The Forgotten Sands* sits in the gap between *Sands Of Time* and *Warrior Within* and sticks relatively close to the style of these two games. Plot-wise the Prince is travelling to the kingdom of his brother Malik only to find it under siege. In desperation Malik releases the Sand Army to defend his city, but they in turn take it from him. The story of this game follows your attempts to re-imprison the army and take back the city for your brother.

As we've said, the gameplay will be very familiar to fans of the trilogy and the controls will be similar, too. Path finding, stringing together moves and traversing traps are all integral and by no means easy. The **X** button handles jumping from object to object as you would expect. Wall running, either vertically or horizontally is dealt with on the **R2** button. Combining jumps with wall runs and vice versa was the bread and butter of the older games and so it is again.

That took a little bit of time to get used to again after the changes that came through with 2008's game. Mix this in with environments that don't always immediately shout 'climbable' at you and battles that take place within the environment and not on separate arena platforms and you've got a challenging mix to begin with.

The additions we saw at around stage eight of the game also included the use of a number of new powers. On top of your ability to manipulate time (which seems to go beyond turning time backwards), you will be given dominion over earth, fire, water and air. We were working our way through some sewers underneath Malik's palace, which called upon our powers of water control, freezing waterfalls and streams coming out of pipes. The waterfalls become walls and the streams become poles you can swing from. All of this is controlled by holding down **L2**, but the effects can only be maintained for a short time. Not a big problem when you've just got to get from one platform to another, but harder when you have

to chain your use of your freezing powers alongside all the leaping, wall running and fighting. When you have to start letting go of **L2** to recharge your freeze power and immediately kick in a wall-run, only to jump from that wall back onto a frozen water stream again, then you begin to feel the challenge *Forgotten Sands* is going to offer.

We really got into that aspect of this latest *Prince Of Persia*, stringing together our new moves with the old and solving the little room puzzles that stood between us and our progress through the game. But it was also good to see some of the old favourites like wall saws, arrows shooting out of walls and spikes rising from the ground. They were like old friends who remind you of better days even though they bullied and teased you.

If nothing else we can say that the puzzles and challenges annoyed us at times but for *Prince Of Persia* that should be taken as a compliment. *POP* was never about making things easy for you and that was one of the reasons why some struggled with its 2008 outing. This is a return to the tougher, more complex days of the series and a welcome one, even if it's only temporary.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A return to the classic gameplay of the *Sands Of Time* trilogy.
- Full of challenging combat and puzzles to solve as you progress.

- New elemental powers that actually tie into the old mechanics for new puzzles.
- It's sandy, but you won't find it gathering in your toes or in your underwear.

READ ME

There's no *Dagger Of Time* in *Forgotten Sands*, but you do still get some time manipulation powers from another source.

The custodians of the *Prince Of Persia* franchise at Ubisoft Montreal remain its developers. There's more info at prince-of-persia.us.ubi.com

PREVIEW



New York, looking as it does on any other day.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 2010

Crysis 2

Wait – what happened to TimeSplitters 4? Oh, this'll do

PHYSICS!

Technology: hurting our brain since the 1790s

CRYTEK IS KNOWN for pushing the boundaries of technology, but this time it has opted to develop its expertise in other ways, like the 'structure procedural system' it has demoed (though not confirmed to be used in *Crysis 2*). In smart-o-terms it means environments aren't prepared for physics-based reactions to your explosive capers *until* you interact with them. That wall is just a flat texture until you shoot it; then it becomes fully destructible. Put simply: it means you can blow up just about everything in the environment and it's a lot easier for the PlayStation 3 to handle than if it were done the old-fashioned way.



Crysis lost its way towards the end, with interesting ideas not executed perfectly and an alien threat that many players simply didn't enjoy battling. But this fact simply slips off into the ether when you consider just how much incredible, instant gratification the first three quarters of the PC-exclusive gave players. Not content with bringing to the fore mega-ultra-destructive-physics on a level we'd not seen before, *Crysis* was also a blueprint for what gaming – in some ways – is all about: power. Thanks to your character's Nanosuit you were stronger, faster and generally *better* than any other human around you, meaning that, yes, you could punch a man through a wall if you wanted, and, yes, you could take out a helicopter with a tortoise should you feel the need. It wasn't presented in any kind of tongue-in-cheek fashion, but *Crysis* ended up being something of a poster child for the very essence of mucking about – something we love so very much at **Play**. So it was with delight that we welcomed the news *Crysis 2* would be coming to PS3, and it's looking absolutely ruddy lovely.

The notion of a standard FPS has been constantly redefined over the last ten years or so, and it seems Crytek is aiming to push the boundaries of what we consider to be 'standard' once more. If the first game had been converted to consoles and put out there, it may have been a minor revolution. As it stands, we still have to wait until the release of the sequel on PlayStation 3 to see if it can kick-start something interesting into what is, frankly, a rather over-subscribed and quite stale genre.

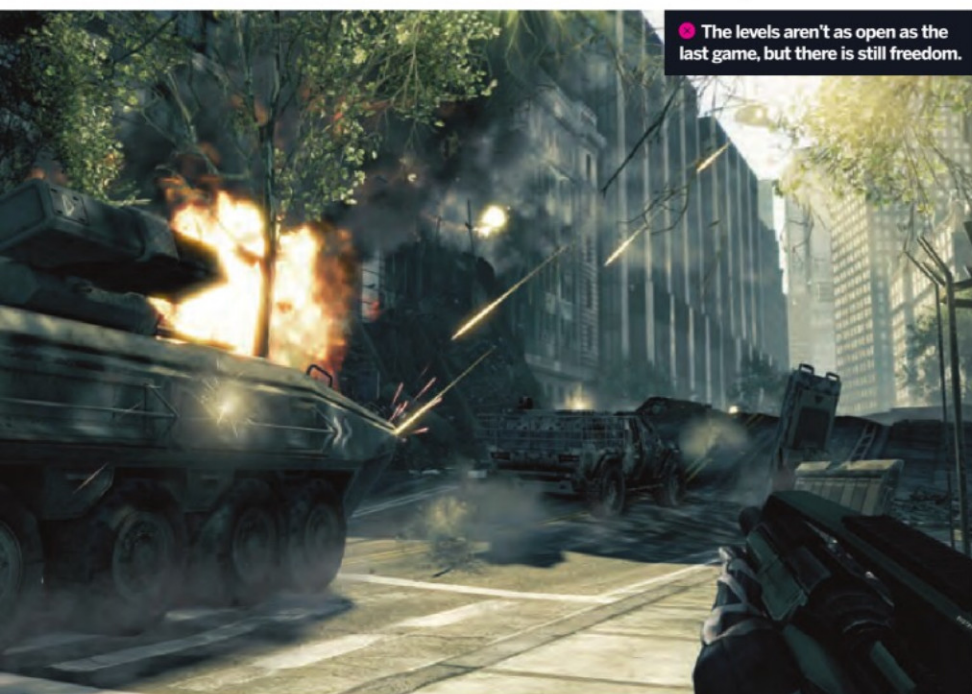
Crysis 2 is set three years after the events of the original, and the conflict – aliens have invaded, don't forget – has escalated and brought the fight to the streets of New York – or Manhattan, to be precise. While this takes us away from the open jungles of the previous game, Crytek has been keen to point out that

this is just an urban jungle anyway. Sigh. Awful puns aside, these less open spaces ("constrained freedom", apparently) are being catered for with what the developer refers to as 'verticality' – a word that just makes us think of *Dark Void*, to be honest. Still, the promise of a smarter bunch of AI enemies who will use the vertical aspects of the playing field ('city') is intriguing, and Crytek is known for pushing technological boundaries, so what it can do with artificial intelligence has us very interested. As for the player character, the upgrades to the Nanosuit (now version 2) may be an in-game vehicle for improved abilities, but they open up the potential for more interesting and varied mechanics while playing, with abilities such as enhanced hearing, X-ray vision and directional bullet trails all sure to mix things up nicely.

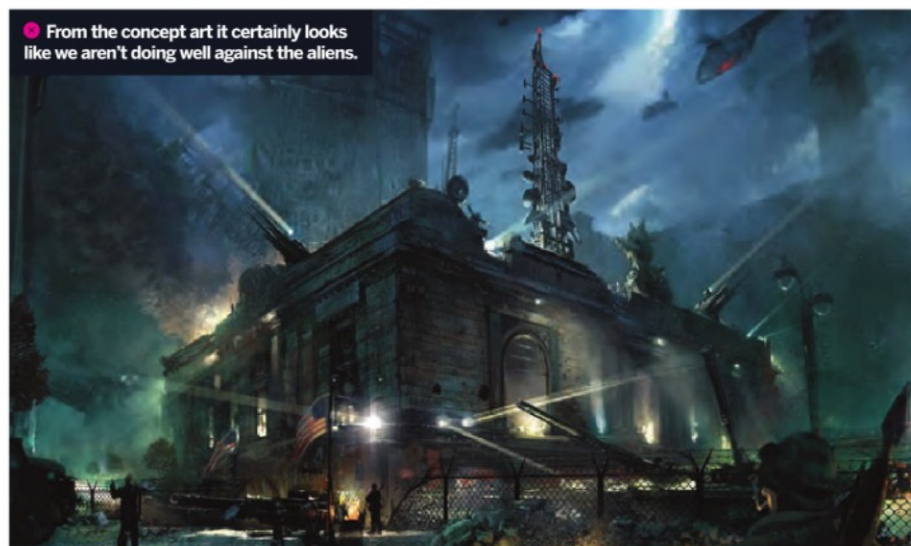
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It has the potential to push the FPS genre forward a fair few paces.
- From what we've seen it looks absolutely spiffy. Like REALLY spiffy.

- The daft technologies mean some wonderfully destructible environments.
- If you can still take down helicopters by throwing tortoises at them, we'll be happy.



● The levels aren't as open as the last game, but there is still freedom.



● From the concept art it certainly looks like we aren't doing well against the aliens.

Speaking of technology, we have been promised that the version of *Crysis 2* we get on PlayStation 3 will be on a par with that of the Xbox 360 and PC. The last game required an absolute beast of a PC a few years ago, and we fully expected the same to be true this time around. While Crytek will still be pushing the game to its limits so those who own monster rigs will be able to take things to the technological boundaries, those of us in normal land with PS3s will be able to enjoy a fantastic-looking title that runs incredibly well and incorporates all of the destruction and dicking-about potential that the first game had. We can't wait to get our hands on this one – and hopefully fling a tortoise to the top of a few skyscrapers.

Crysis 2 is being developed by Crytek. Visit www.ea.com/games/crysis-2 for more details.

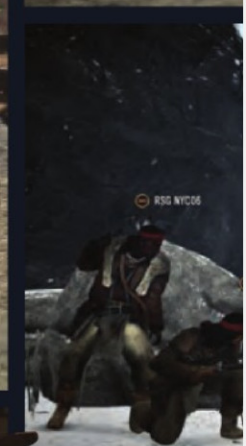
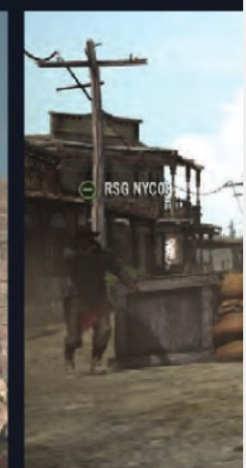
READ ME

Crysis 2 is, surprisingly, the sequel to 2007's marvel of technology *Crysis*. Ian's PC still can't handle the original game at anything above 'very low' graphical settings.



● Throw a tortoise at them!

PREVIEW

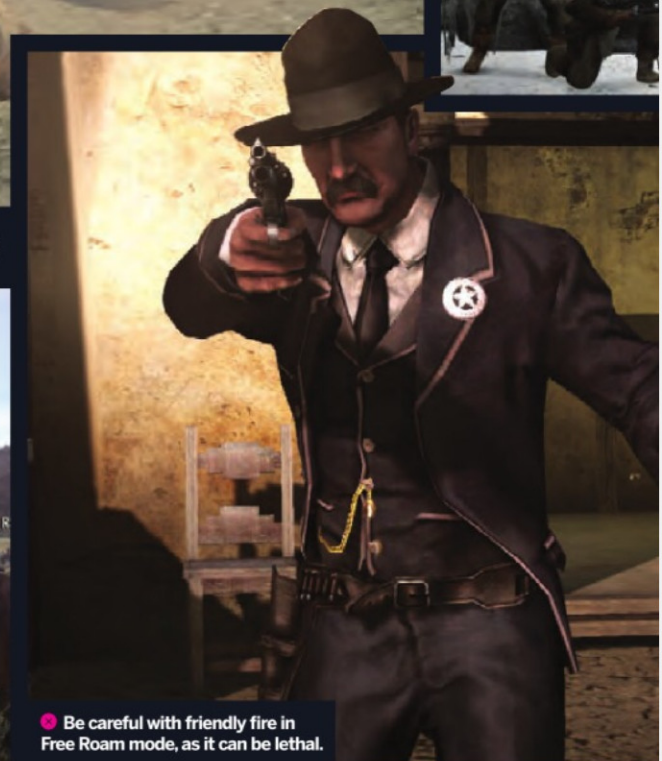


DEAD AIM

The balancing of Red Dead online



ONE ASPECT OF *Red Dead Redemption's* multiplayer that really impressed us was how the gameplay mechanics of the single-player game and the limitations of the period were adapted to enhance the game. While the *GTA IV* template for *Red Dead's* multiplayer is obvious, the slow-loading, heavy-hitting weapons don't exactly match the faster and more efficient arsenal available in Liberty City. This completely changes the way you play the game, adding greater value to stealth and positioning. Dead Eye also travels to multiplayer and helps bridge the gap with *GTA IV*. Unlike playing solo, Dead Eye doesn't take place in bullet-time, but it will build up as you get kills and it allows you to paint targets on your enemies. The trade-off for that is that while painting targets can guarantee a kill, it also eats up time where you're getting shot, too. It all plays off really nicely.





RELEASE DATE: 21 MAY

Red Dead Redemption

The West has never been so wild as it is online

● Finding a spot close to the drop-off in Gold Rush is a sneaky way to pick up points.



Rockstar might well admit that online is still a field in which it is a newcomer and that it's still finding its feet. Having said that, *Grand Theft Auto IV* showed a lot of promise and despite being an early effort from the development team it outstripped many other, much more established online titles. Like so much else Rockstar does, it brought its own spin to the online space that made *GTA IV* online feel unique and the same is going to be true of *Red Dead Redemption*, only this time it's much more accomplished.

Redemption really picks up from where *GTA* left off. With up to 16 players online the entire open world of the main game is yours to explore straight away and that includes all the subsidiary activities you can enjoy playing solo. You can just start shooting at each other if you like, running around the open world and taking pot shots at one another and it will be fun, but you can do so much more. Animal hunting, skinning, herb collecting and mixing and most importantly gang killing are all possible. All of these activities will also earn you XP that can be spent on customising your character for online play. You could theoretically earn XP online without ever shooting another player.

You can shoot some NPCs regardless and the gang missions are a real highlight of the Free Roam mode that kicks off any multiplayer session. Posse leaders will be assigned at the beginning of a session and they can direct everyone to a gang hideout somewhere in the world. Once we drew in close the bandits or outlaws would appear in the mini-map and we would take them out as quickly as possible. With ten of us playing it was no great struggle, but

then three more waves of reinforcements arrived in turn, ratcheting up the action. For one mission we had to go from building to building taking the gang members out before laying siege to a large mansion where the leader had settled, only to find the gang well positioned and ready to fight.

Dynamite was thrown through the windows, Molotovs set fire to anything they touched and those with an eye for tactics were looking to gain entry through the basement while attentions were drawn to the front door. With our larger numbers (and the fact that we could re-spawn) we were bound to win, but the fight was fierce all the same and great cheers rang out when the gang leader was finally capped. But all this is just a distraction. It was just in the lobby where we waited to play the online game proper.

Before every multiplayer game mode you'll be thrown into a shoot-out. If you're about to take part in a team game then the opposing forces will be set up facing each other, otherwise you'll all be in a circle. In a team scenario you must simply kill the guy in front of you before they kill you, whereas in the circle *Red Dead* will suggest a target for you in the group. It could be the hombre right next to you. The resultant massacre is a unique way to kick off a game and it should all add to your total XP for the game.

We started our main multiplayer session with some basic Team Deathmatch. The map is open so you can go anywhere, but re-spawning and pickups were centred around a small township, concentrating the action. As with all other modes, online or off, you can whistle for your horse by hitting up on the D-pad, but if you choose

stealth over speed and crouch you'll be invisible on everyone's mini-map. Respawn points tended to be on the fringe of the town or within buildings so that you had a few moments to set yourself, but the importance of the high ground and climbing up on buildings was quickly apparent.

An alternative to the Deathmatch, which offers a broader playing area is Capture The Bag; a basic reworking of Capture The Flag mode. Each team has a base with strong defences such as Gatling guns, weapon pickups and ammo. In the middle of the map we played there was also a mountain and a cannon on a turret. We found a mixture of men on horseback, a sniper and some men sneaking on foot was the best way to infiltrate the opposition base. Similar to Capture The Bag is Gold Rush, which is an all-on-all mode with multiple bags and drop-off points in a confined space. You must grab a bag and get it to that point without being killed. If you die the bag drops where you fell. The level of tension as bags crawled closer and closer to their destinations was immense.

We have to say we enjoyed all of the modes we played, but that's only a fraction of what *Red Dead Redemption* is going to offer. Rockstar wouldn't be drawn on details of a co-op mode but we don't think we're sticking our necks out too far to say you should expect something in the vein of Cops 'n Crooks and other co-operative modes. This is a whole new reason to be excited by Rockstar's latest game.

The lads and lasses at Rockstar San Diego are behind *Red Dead Redemption*. There's more info to be found at www.rockstargames.com/reddeadredemption

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- All the open-world elements of the solo game to enjoy, but with your friends.
- Really good weapon and mechanic balancing that keeps everything exciting.
- Frantic 'every man for himself' modes that really get the blood pumping.
- Up to 16 players trooping together through the desert, dishing out justice.

READ ME

When you first start out online the only mount available to you will be a donkey. Levelling up your character, however, will unlock horses and eventually a stallion for you to use.

PREVIEW



There are heavy amounts of destructibility in this game, so watch your cover.

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST

Mafia II

Teaching us that smoking can kill

We've been waiting a long time to get our hands on *Mafia II*. Ever since we got an extended presentation of 2K Czech's sequel at gamescom in Cologne last year *Mafia II* has been at the top of our 'most anticipated' list. Its mix of story, sandbox and action was one that immediately appealed to us. Having now played it briefly, we feel a lot more confident about the mechanics of this expansive title. 2K has clearly thrown its weight behind this game and these early glimpses of the final product made it clear that *Mafia II* is still one of the most important releases of 2010.

We began our demo in Vito Scaletta's apartment. From the underwear on the bedroom floor and the empty, stained wine glasses on the coffee table it was clear Scaletta had a little fun the night before. As it was we'd just begun a chapter called Wild Ones – the whole game is structured in a linear fashion of chapters, even though the world remains open at all times. Vito found a note from his pal Joe in the kitchen telling him to meet him for a job in the city. Unfortunately, Vito was still in his boxers, so first we had get some clothes on. There were some casual jeans and a leather jacket in Vito's wardrobe, but we thought we'd go for the full trench coat and hat look so we really felt the part. By this point in the game Vito has earned the right to really look like a gangster.

This particular chapter of the game took place in the early-Fifties, which

puts it somewhere around the middle of the game. At this point Vito and Joe have really started to establish themselves in the criminal underworld, have gained the attention and patronage of some big-time gangsters and are trusted enough to handle some pretty big jobs. Vito begins the game as an injured serviceman returning from the war in Europe. He's only been given a short leave, though, and is expected back on the front soon. Joe meets him as he arrives back in Empire Bay and somehow manages to get him the papers that will discharge him from the Army without any more questions asked. His path into the underworld has begun to be laid out ahead of him.

The real motivation for Vito to get involved with organised crime in Empire Bay appears to be his family. While we haven't been given any firm answers yet, it would seem Vito's late father was in a lot of debt when he died. His mother and sister still need supporting, though. This at least adds some nobility and purpose to Vito's journey, even if the events that make it will often seem violent and self-serving. For our first hands-on mission we would be selling some hooky cigarettes from the back of a truck.

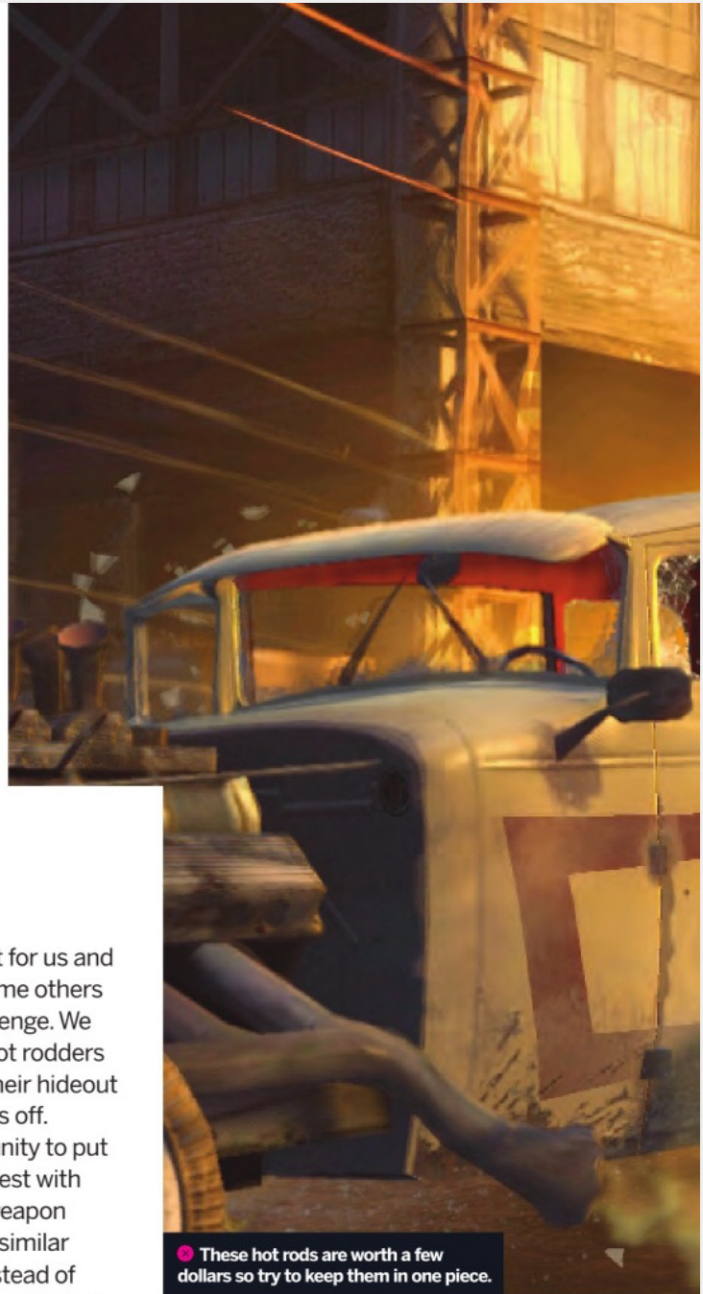
Things don't exactly go to plan as a bunch of hot rod-driving hoods decide to firebomb the truck. They claim we're operating on their turf, but Joe claims their leader's head can't stop a bullet. Turns out he was right. A short pursuit ensues, but the gang's

souped-up cars are too fast for us and we have to regroup with some others in our crew to exact our revenge. We shoot up a bar, which the hot rodders frequent, then it's over to their hideout where a running battle kicks off.

This was a great opportunity to put the combat system to the test with its cover, free-aiming and weapon types. Getting into cover is similar to *GTA IV*, only using **X** instead of **R1**. Press to get into cover and press again to come out. It's very simple and perfectly effective. Once in cover you can use **L2** to aim out, which is the same button used for more accurate aiming when you're just shooting. We had a regular pistol, Magnum and Tommy gun to play with as we pushed the gang further and further back into the complex. The Tommy gun was effective, mowing through the thugs, but its recoil made it hard to aim. The Magnum also had a kick, but its power meant our targets dropped from single shots more often than not. The pistol was more accurate, but weaker. All in all a good balance of weapons and we switched often for the best results.

With all the gang dead, Joe and Vito decide to take a couple of the hot rod cars to sell. It was a revealing hands-on that confirmed what we were fairly sure of already. 2K Czech has a very solid game on its hands and we have a story to really look forward to.

2K Czech continues to helm the *Mafia* franchise and is looking after this outing. You can find out much more at www.mafia2game.com



These hot rods are worth a few dollars so try to keep them in one piece.



The cops are extraordinarily aggressive and will try to push you off the road.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Highly detailed Forties and Fifties setting that is full of character and incident.
- Solid mechanics that will be easy for any sandbox veteran to pick up and master.
- Realistic car handling with plenty of variation between models and types.
- A thoroughly engaging story that puts you in the boots of a real hood.

READ ME

2K has done a deal with *Playboy* to get real covers from the Forties and Fifties in the game as collectable items scattered around the world.



● Keeping a Tommy gun on target can be a challenge as the recoil is harsh.



● The brutal force of gunfire in *Mafia II* is likely to knock you off your feet.

THE SMALLER THINGS

It's the little details that make *Mafia II*

WE ALREADY KNEW a little about the level of period detail and accuracy we could expect from *Mafia II* before we sat down to play it, but spending some time with it made an impression. The first things we came to enjoy were the car radios with their wonderful selection of licensed music. There were three stations to listen to for the demo, each with a mix of swing, jazz and even a little blues. It was worth driving around just to listen to that. We also paid a visit to a gas station where a valet filled our car up, once again taking straight from the etiquette of the time. We also spent some time and money in a garage, customising our number plate (it read PLAY 01), changing the rims on our car and updating the colour. We also went to a clothing store and picked up a very sharp-looking suit, but that was more because the cops were chasing us and we needed to change our appearance so they wouldn't recognise Vito any more.



PREVIEW



● Damage and impact are expressed using this mysterious hologramatic light.



● There are some made up cars in the mix, but mostly they're real-life licensed models.

RELEASE DATE: JUNE

Blur

Coming into focus, at last

Until we were invited to go and play it, we'd heard very little about *Blur* for several months. Back in September we heard that it had been delayed 'til 2010, but that's been about all since its showing at E3 2009. And now that we have been invited to go and play it, and have gone, and have played it, we're delighted to report that there's a good reason for both the delay and for the long silence. Major changes were being made.

was a placeholder at the time and wouldn't be that annoying in the final game, but we weren't convinced by the whole story idea, and it seems we weren't the only ones – it's been cut. Instead you'll progress through single-player using a fairly standard tier system. And we don't use the word 'standard' there to imply that it's boring or unimaginative, rather to imply that it's clear, functional, unobtrusive and doesn't ever say, "Hey! You must be the new racer everyone's talking about. I bet you're

Bizarre has listened to feedback and has created a game that's fun and accessible

It's still fundamentally the same game based on the same 'Mario Kart with real cars' vision Bizarre started with, but some of the ideas that had initially left us unsure about the direction *Blur* was going have been either dramatically reworked or removed altogether.

You might remember that the single-player mode was originally going to take a story-driven form, presumably along similar lines to something like *Midnight Club* except not taking place in an open-world environment. We never saw any narrative scenes, but the race demos we'd been shown before featured a lot of inane chatter in bad accents between racers. We were told this

not as fast as me. Let's race!" or, y'know, something like that.

So yeah, now you pick a race and, depending on your performance, earn rewards like more cars, more tracks and more races from which to earn more rewards. We've played a bazillion racing games with structure like that, true, but that includes most of our favourites, so it's fine by us.

One thing you don't have to do in single-player is unlock features to be used in offline, split-screen multiplayer, which has traditionally been a slight failing in the *Mario Kart* series. If you wanted to play *Mario Kart* with your mates using a full range of cars, tracks and modes, you had to play all the way through



● That's not fire, it's hologramatic light that happens to be orange.

single-player to unlock it all so a) they had to wait, and b) by the time you'd unlocked everything you were loads better than everyone else. Not the case in split-screen *Blur*. You can have a full-featured four-player, one sofa session straight out of the box.

Bizarre clearly understands how the mentality of offline multiplayer differs from online multiplayer, which brings us neatly onto *Blur*'s online features, which were another area of concern for us when the game was first introduced. Perhaps it was in part because they had to explain it to us without actually showing it to us before, but when two Bizarre representatives described the planned 'Groups' system shortly before E3 last year, we found it very difficult to understand what they were talking about or what the benefit of it was. It sounded over-complicated, inaccessible and likely to excite only the most hardcore, long-serving members of Bizarre's fan community. Giving the community the tools to customise the game how they want is all well and good, we thought, but there's no substitute for tried-and-tested modes in a tried-and-tested

structure. Why doesn't it make it work in a way that everyone can understand? Why doesn't it make it like *Call Of Duty*? And funnily enough, that's what Bizarre did.

There's still a host of customisation and community features in *Blur*'s multiplayer portion, but the 'Groups' system is no longer at its heart. Instead, there's a player progression system very similar to that found in *Call Of Duty*. Each race earns you Fan Points based on your placing and on various other in-race challenges you may have completed, and the more Fan Points you get, the more you level up, with each new level bringing new features, including new cars, modes and Mods. Mods are just like Perks in *COD*. There are three categories, with a slot and a choice of Mods for each. In this way, you can tailor your driver profile to your own individual style. Again, it's maybe not as distinctive as what Bizarre had planned before, but it works and people like it, so we're not complaining.

So yes, it seems as if Bizarre has listened to feedback and come back with a game that's fun and accessible both on and off the track. With both *Blur* and *Split/Second* now on the final development straight, there's a very promising couple of months coming up for fans of action-heavy racing games.

Blur is being developed by Bizarre Creations. Check the website for more details: www.bizarrecreations.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Perfect balance between arcade and simulation handling.
- Power-ups will make it fun even for non-racing fans.
- The annoying character-driven story has been dropped.
- Some of the most expansive online features ever seen in a racer.

READ ME

You can create challenges in *Blur* then send them to a friend, who then has to complete it and send you a challenge of their own.





● The Barge power-up is very useful when racing in a pack.



● The carnage has been toned down a little compared to what Bizarre initially described, but it's still pretty wild.

SPLIT TIMES

Going back to your quarters

PLAYING BLUR IN four-player split-screen is so much fun and so fast and so smooth and so close to the level of detail you get in the main game, you have to wonder why developers stopped doing split-screen for a while. We suppose the advent of huge flatscreen TVs has helped make it more viable, but we suspect the mistaken belief that online play would somehow make split-screen obsolete was behind the trend to start dropping it. They must've been crazy. Split-screen games are an absolute must-have in a shared house.



● The story has been dropped so now you can just concentrate on the racing.



PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Enslaved: Odyssey To The West

There's no business like Monkey business

It's good to see that Ninja Theory's latest project is finally coming to some fruition. It originally spawned from research into Eastern culture during the development of PS3-exclusive *Heavenly Sword*. That brought the developer to *Journey To The West*, a classic tale of Chinese literature, and the idea of retelling it in a future setting moved from China to a post-apocalyptic America. That much you hopefully already know. You should also know that Andy Serkis returns to work with Ninja Theory, this time playing our hero Monkey, that Danny Boyle collaborator Alex Garland is writing the script and has been involved in production from the start and that musician Nitin Sawhney is handling all the music again. All those things are good, but let's get down to the stuff you won't have been told until now.

The setting of *Enslaved*, now subtitled *Odyssey To The West* to tie it in more tightly with the source of inspiration, is New York around 150 years into our future. The world has been ravaged by both nuclear and chemical war. Little is left of the civilisation we live in today and even less is remembered. But rather than the bleak greys and browns of *Fallout 3*, *Enslaved* sees

the future in shades of green and gold. New York has fallen apart, but Mother Earth has claimed it back, covering everything with wild vegetation. However, plants aren't the only things that occupy the city, as the remnants of humanity's wars include mechs that have sat waiting like land mines. The wars are over but the mechs were never deactivated and as far as they're concerned anything that crosses their path must die.

That's the world that Monkey and his less than amicable partner Trip must navigate. Trip has placed a slave headband on Monkey to force him to help her home after escaping a slaver ship together. While the headband can cause Monkey excruciating pain and ultimately kill him if Trip wishes, it also offers him some tech abilities, such as access to a HUD. It's a nice little sidestep of gaming conventions, much like *Assassin's Creed's* Animus HUD and with Trip's tech knowledge she is able to upload all sorts of useful markers and data to the screen for you to see. Things like enemy weak spots, routes for sneaking and interactive objects can all be given to you. The radius within which the mechs will activate (like a land mine again) will also be displayed for you

thanks to the headband, so all in all it's not so bad.

While Trip is by no means helpless, she can't fight off the machines so carrying her, leaping distances that she can't and finding her places to hide are all important. That leaves you free to crack out some of Monkey's awesome-looking staff combos, mixing light, heavy and stun attacks. With bigger enemies you can ultimately use kill moves that may also leave you with things like gun arms to use against other mechs. Up against things like gun turrets, however, the head-on approach isn't always smart and you can get Trip to play decoy and draw fire away from you using some fancy holographic tricks. We noticed there was also an option for some sort of EMP from Trip, but we didn't get to see it in action.

Enslaved seems to have all the ingredients to make it a unique and engrossing adventure with excellent characters, a great story and engaging gameplay. Lessons have been learnt from *Heavenly Sword* and Ninja Theory is clearly putting them into practice here.

Heavenly Sword creator Ninja Theory is the operation behind **Enslaved**. There's more info to be found at www.ninjatheory.com



• Trip has no trouble walking or anything, but she enjoys a piggyback ride.

• As his name would suggest Monkey isn't half bad at climbing things.



• Blindsiding a gun turret can be a very handy move in tight battles.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A beautiful vision of humanity's demise as the apocalypse goes green.
- More excellent motion-capture work from the award-winning Andy Serkis.
- A classic story retold in an interesting and involving way.
- Lots of smart gameplay mechanics that offer you real tactical choices.

READ ME

The population of North America in *Enslaved* is only supposed to be around 50,000 after the devastation of so many wars.



• The Earth has reclaimed New York and given Monkey a wonderful playground.



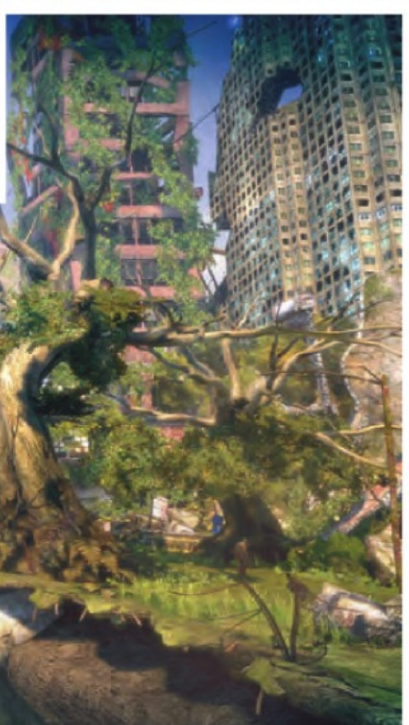
• Monkey's staff is a lot more explosive than your typical stick weapon.



SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS

SWATting the mechs in Enslaved

WITH MONKEY'S RAW power and Trip's tech-savvy you have a lot of different options going into a fight, but you also have some serious limitations. Trip can't defend herself against the mechs and Monkey is in no position to start hacking them. You have to be confrontational, but you have to pick your battles, too. To this end Trip can point out advantageous points in the local area as well as the range at which mechs will activate and attack. Picking out the major threat and making it your focus is paramount. Some mechs will transmit a homing signal to call on others, so disabling those is your first priority. You may also need to take out a gun turret, but this can be taken over and used for your own ends.



• Both Trip and Monkey have lived relatively isolated lives and know little of the old world.



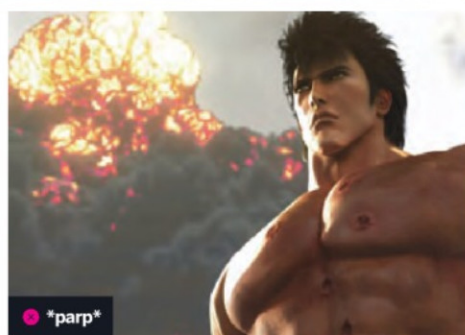
PREVIEW



● This man can probably punch things into explosive deaths.



● This looks more like the *Dynasty Warriors* we know and love/hate.



● *parp*



● Vehicles (ie horses) in *Dynasty Warriors* don't have a good track record.



● Explosive crossbow + spiky wall + lots of enemies = fun?

DYNASTY FIST WARRIORS STAR

We're not quite sure how we're meant to feel

FIST OF THE *North Star* is a spin-off of the *Dynasty Warriors* series, and as such leaves us pretty ambivalent towards it. On the one hand, it has the potential to be completely ridiculous fun, with a surprising amount of tactical depth. Like *Dynasty Warriors*. On the other hand, it could be absolutely awful. Like *Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce*. We shall see.



FIRST LOOK

● We're pretty sure this means he's moving 'well quick, like'.



RELEASE DATE: SUMMER

Fist Of The North Star

"Don't you understand? Now I'm fist of the north star!"

Based on the classic (or 'classic', depending on your opinion) anime/manga *Hokuto No Ken*, *Fist Of The North Star* – as we call it here – is also based on another classic ('classic') franchise from the East in the shape of *Dynasty Warriors*. A spin-off of the batter-'em-up series, *Fist Of The North Star* aims to – if the PR blurb is to be believed – hark back to the time when scrolling brawlers dominated the gaming landscape, while at the same time bringing it "bang up to date".

A number of characters, each with separate stories to play through, are available to play as, along with some secret types. Each can get involved in some ridiculously over-the-top combat with the violence any offshoot of the *Hokuto No Ken* franchise has to have. The result is a fast-paced explosion of gaming joy all over your screen, with flashy combos, daft special moves and even some cut-scenes we'll all probably ignore thrown in for good measure. And that's without

mentioning the motorbikes. The 'up to date' aspects come in the form of – among other things – destructible environments, which are always welcome around these parts. Backed up by a comprehensive physics system, this could change the experience from a mild diversion

The result is a fast-paced explosion of gaming joy all over your screen

into something worth harping on about to all who will listen.

We're not sure what to think of this one (see the boxout for more evidence of this), but there's every chance *Fist Of The North Star* could be a welcome distraction. It could even be really good, if it gets the tone right – along with how the game actually plays, of course. We're always happy to see what looks like a niche title getting a release on Western shores, though, so this is one to celebrate for now.

Omega Force is developing **Fist Of The North Star**. Visit www.koei.co.uk/viewgame/?gid=92 for more details.

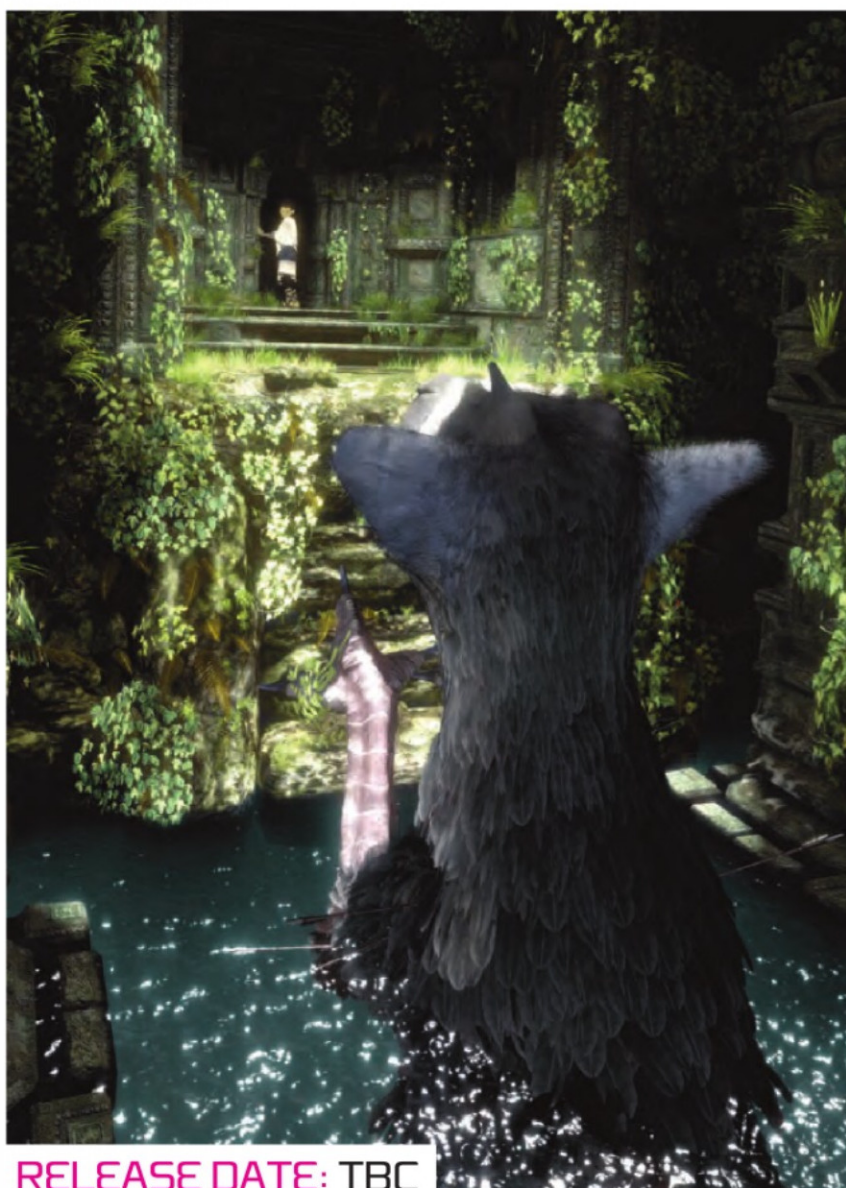
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A popular anime and manga franchise with a PS3 lick of paint
- Tecmo Koei obviously likes large breasts. As do we here at **Play**.
- Hammering a single button for eight hours is always fun, right?
- Thankfully it's not the atrocious *Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce*.

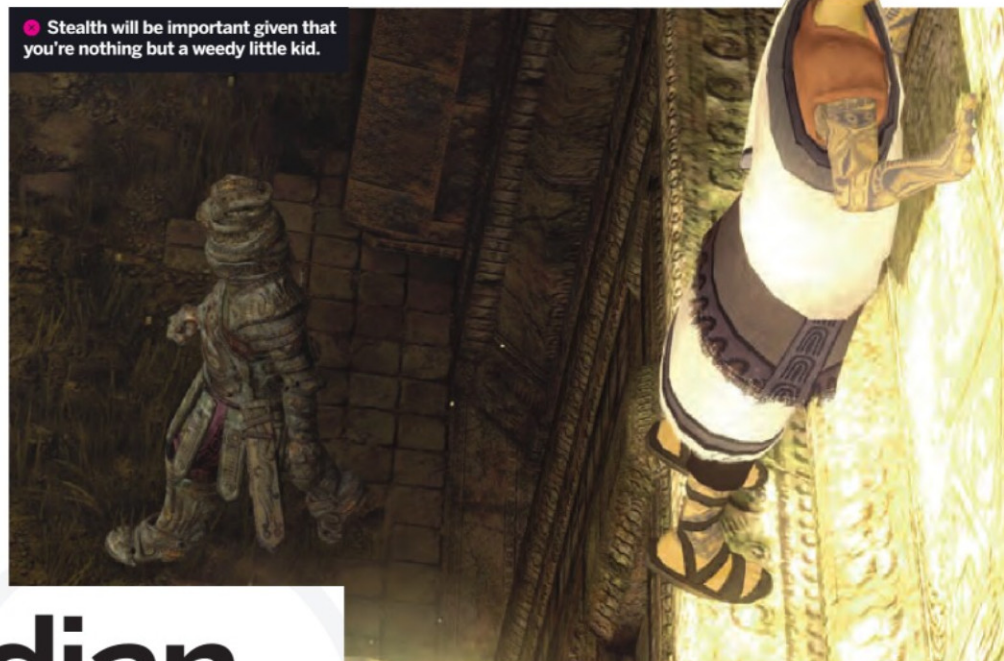
READ ME

The *Hokuto No Ken* franchise, of which *Fist Of The North Star* is a part, has been around since 1983, originally as a series of manga comics illustrated by Tetsuo Hara.

UPDATE



● If you press the wrong button here, it eats you and the game's over. Not really.



● Stealth will be important given that you're nothing but a weedy little kid.

RELEASE DATE: TBC

The Last Guardian

Aww... look at his massive face

The *Last Guardian* is a mysterious game. Even years after it's been released and everyone with the good taste to play it has done so, many mysteries regarding its true nature will no doubt still remain. So right now, when we're at least six months from the game's launch and have been promised no new information this side of E3, we're even more in the dark than

But if you think we're going to have Sony send us 40 new hi-res screens of this truly gorgeous game and not print a handful of them for you to join us in cooing over, then you've got another thing coming. What kind of other thing coming, we're not sure, but to be perfectly frank, we could probably speculate more accurately about that than about *The Last Guardian*. What? It's mysterious. Deal with it.

We could have posted them on our website, sure we could, but then when you inevitably gave into the urge

to reach out and touch them your fingers would have been met with the soulless texture of a plasma, LCD or, worse still, glass monitor

screen. Here at least you have the relatively soft caress of paper to comfort you while you wait for something more. Something that you can really grasp. Like a Trico plushy perhaps.

You could even get some glue and some feathers from inside a pillow or duvet (or outside a goose) and stick them carefully on the page on all the feathery bits, then wait for it to dry and stroke it some more for a really authentic feel. That might sound silly, and it is we suppose, but it would be good practice for playing a game which is all about taking tender care of your gigantic feathered friend.

The *Last Guardian* is being developed by Team Ico. Check the website for more details: www.jp.playstation.com/scej/title/trico

Even years after it's been released, many mysteries will no doubt still remain

some of the new *Last Guardian* screens you won't see printed here because we decided they were simply too dark.

● Our bath plug at home looks a bit like this. Perhaps it's time to clean it.



IS IT A BIRD?

The eagle has landed... heavily

TRICO, OR TORIKO if you want to be Japanese and throw in an extra syllable, has clearly been inspired by several real-world creatures, but the one referenced in the Japanese name of the game is 'Oowashi', which is a specific species of eagle – Steller's Sea Eagle, as it's known in the West. However, more literally, 'oowashi' means 'giant eagle', which makes sense, as it's the heaviest eagle in the world.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- So beautiful that we want to marry it. Really, we do.
- Actually, we'd rather put it in formaldehyde to preserve its beauty.
- EyePet has given us an appetite for taking care of weird-looking animals.
- It's name in Japan is *Toriko The Giant Man-Eating Eagle*.

READ ME

SCE Worldwide Studios president Shuhei Yoshida calls Team Ico Sony's 'Olympic Team' because it releases a game every four years. Except it's a bit late this time.



MercurySteam seems to be going after something quite moody with this game.



Platforming may actually play an important role in this *Castlevania*.



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow

Don't go Counting this one out just yet



TREASURE HUNTERS

Uncharted love from MercurySteam

LIKE MANY OTHERS the *Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow* developer has been keen to ape *Uncharted* in its attempt to update the franchise. While the focus seems to be on combat over puzzle solving, MercurySteam has cited *Uncharted* as its key influence in designing platforming areas in the game. Not a bad place to get inspiration if you ask us.

Info continues to trickle through after *Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow* was finally announced at E3 last year. Another E3 is almost upon us and we imagine we'll be getting a closer and more personal appraisal of the game then, but in the meantime we'll have to make do with ogling these new screens and speculating on what the final product will offer us.

If nothing else we're feeling more confident about this incarnation of *Castlevania* than any of the 3D offerings that have come before it. For one thing there is clearly a lot of love for the series at MercurySteam, the game's maker, and while Hideo

Kojima may only be involved in its production in a loose sense, his presence is apparently having an impact. Last we heard Kojima was spending a bit of time in Spain with the development team looking to push the quality of *Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow* as far as he could. Kojima Productions is already helping with some of the combat animations and cut-scenes. It should be noted, though, that these scenes will not be CGI as is traditional with the KojiPro team. They will all be handled with the in-game engine, which is not exactly shabby looking.

In terms of gameplay, as you will know well enough, this isn't a

traditional *Castlevania* title by any means. Comparisons abound to *God Of War* and *Devil May Cry*, but MercurySteam is insistent that it is doing something more mature and emotionally involving than your typical hack-'n'-slash adventure. The screenshots released thus far certainly show more shedding of blood than shedding of tears, but the cast (Jason Isaacs, Patrick Stewart and so on) suggests some heavyweight performances behind the blood and guts.

Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow is being developed by MercurySteam. You can find out more at konami.jp/kojima_pro/e3_2009/castlevania

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's *Castlevania* for crying out loud! What isn't great about that we ask you?
- Supposedly taking *Super Castlevania* as its template, which is a smart move.
- Solid cast of actors lending their vocal talents to the project = gravitas.
- Kojima may actually be more involved than we first thought. Wait, is that good?

READ ME

Have we mentioned before that *Lords Of Shadow* was always a *Castlevania* game, but Konami was scared of the reaction it would get?



Those blocks might look 3D, but they're actually not. It's like 3D used to be (ie 2D).



RELEASE DATE: MAY

Sonic 4: Episode 1

If he's so fast, why's this taken 16 years?

When *Sonic Adventure* came out, everyone bought it then said, "Nah... go back to 2D." When *Sonic Adventure 2* came out everyone bought it then said, "Nah... go back to 2D." When *Sonic Heroes* came out everyone bought it then said, "Nah... go back to 2D." And so it went on and on and on until... well, this generation, pretty much. Two 3D *Sonic* games have come out for the PS3 and nobody bought 'em. After a decade and a half of mostly 3D, mostly subpar *Sonic* games, fans finally voted with their wallets, sending a clear message to Sega. That message...

Go. Back. To. 2D.

And finally, Sega has done it. What we appear to have here, as the title suggests, is the first proper game from the proper *Sonic* series, since 1994. Nothing more, nothing less. It's just... what we've been asking for all this time. No 3D, no gimmicks and no hedgehogs of colours other than blue. What's the catch?

We don't think there is one. The only thing we saw that wasn't pure, classic *Sonic* was the new homing spin, whereby Sonic can automatically dash attack into a nearby target while in midair at the touch of a button. Veterans who prefer the old-fashioned method of bouncing manually from enemy to enemy in midair might think this is a little bit of a cop-out, but we can see it helping the action to flow, and that's what *Sonic* ought to be about, so we're not going to condemn it out of hand.

But we're also in no hurry to declare the second coming of the real *Sonic* just yet. Sorry, our spiky-backed chum, but 16 years of sorrow and pain and disappointment doesn't wash away that easily. Needless to say, we'll be scrutinising this one very thoroughly when it hits the PlayStation Store a few weeks from now.

Sonic 4 is being developed by Sonic Team and Dimps. Check the website for more details: www.dimps.co.jp



The sunflowers spin when you run past them. It's so lovely.



SOUND BARRIER

Less talk, more do

SONIC 4 FEATURES a lot of very happy, very retro sounding music. Not retro as in primitive or low quality but like... a Mega Drive sound chip matured and evolved, but not changed. But it does not feature very much talking. In fact, it may feature none at all – we certainly didn't hear any. There are no cut-scenes and barely any story either. *Sonic* just saves animals from Dr Eggman by running and jumping from left to right. Ah, bliss...



There are no AI issues with those fish. They know exactly how to go up and then, the tricky part, down.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

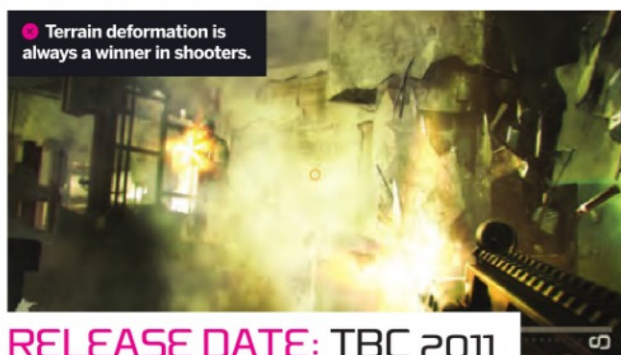
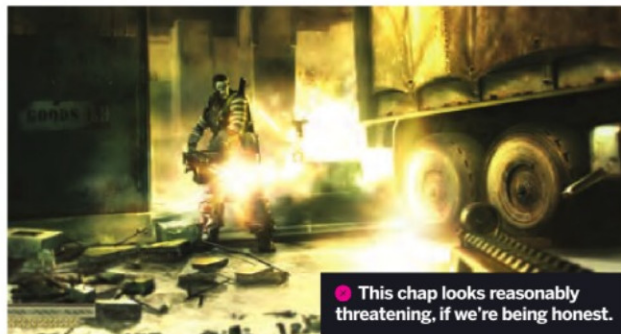
- The closest we've seen to a proper new *Sonic* game for many years.
- It's very fast. Like hedgehogs aren't.
- If any rubbish characters appear, it'll probably be as optional DLC.
- The 16-bit pixelated *Sonic* makes a few cameos.

READ ME

There are four zones in *Sonic 4: Episode 1*, the first of which features three levels, plus a boss stage. The other three are presumably the same size.

PREVIEW

FIRST LOOK



RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

Bodycount

Boom! Shake, shake, shake the room

We're going to open with an unquestionably harsh statement here: the announcement of *Bodycount* filled us with a grand sense of 'so what?' Another FPS, another rather dull-looking setting and some more explosions to get that fleeting bit of happiness from before sinking away, depressed and lonely, onto the next cheap thrill. Then we found out *Bodycount* was something of a spiritual successor to 2006's *Black*, which we really rather liked (89% in issue 138, no less), and everything changed.

So it doesn't look any better in our eyes – to be honest there's

nothing that really jumps out and grabs you about the game – and if we were judging it on the originality-o-meter *Bodycount* would not score very highly at all. But the merest mention of an ex-Criterion Games bod (and also some associates who worked on the *Black* development team) and we can't help but have a decent-sized glimmer of hope that *Bodycount* may well turn out to be a far better game than the sum of its parts. Basically, we want it to be *Black 2*, and we'll keep on saying Black – Black, Black, Black – until *Bodycount* turns into it.

What do you mean we're supposed to talk about the game

here? Oh, okay then. *Bodycount* is an FPS which sees players working for the 'Network' as they aim to take down 'Targets' – we're not even making this up. Combat looks to be deliciously explosive, however, and the promise of destructible cover has us quite happy, though we're not sure if this stretches to the ability to destroy terrain yet. We're also hoping it might have a fun multiplayer. It might not look like it's going to set the world on fire, but *Bodycount* definitely has a chance of blowing it up.

Bodycount is being developed by Codemasters. Check out www.codemasters.co.uk for more details.



VERSION 0.1

We're barely past the 'announced' stage

BODYCOUNT IS STILL very early in development, so elements such as vehicles and the way players can choose which approach they want to take on a mission haven't been revealed in any great detail. Still, it's good to see that there will be something below the surface, rather than another also-ran in the world of FPSs. Potentially, at least.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Destructible environments are commonplace now, but we still love them.
- Gun-porn is always a welcome sight, we have to admit.
- *Black* came slightly too late to be fully appreciated – *Bodycount* can make up for this.
- It's always good to have another generic-looking FPS on the horizon.

READ ME

Body Count are an American metal band fronted by hip-hop megastar Ice T. According to Gav, it is "difficult to tell if they're joking or not".



● The dragon only moves horizontally, and eats everyone.

● Honestly, it's more fun than it looks.

● We thought this would be a Michael Jackson joke. It isn't.



RELEASE DATE: MAY

What Did I Do To Deserve This, My Lord!? 2

Holy infringement of copyright, Acquireman!

What Did I Do To Deserve This, My Lord!? 2 isn't just a good way to bite a chunk out of your word count, it's also the title of the sequel to 2009's *Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?* The change in name comes down to some legal issues, with a certain company not liking how the original title alluded to a certain Dark Knight – so Acquire went with the new name. Simple.

Still, the confusion doesn't end there, as this sequel is coming seven months after the original arrived in Europe and really doesn't bring a great deal of newness to the table. From an extended playtest it's clear that things remain – generally speaking – the same. Additions come in the form of mutations, which can occur for a number of reasons (including obesity, which is always funny) and the Overlord's Chamber, offering a free play mode to just muck about in.

The former throws in a few new elements to the whole ecology system of the first game that impressed us a fair bit (73% is a "fair bit", apparently). It mixes the system up and, while we haven't been able to test it thoroughly, should offer new strategic elements to defending your dungeons from encroaching heroic types. The latter is pure sandbox, allowing you to just play a dungeon free of restrictions, inviting heroes into battle whenever you feel and generally observing how the ecology of any given setup can work.

We're at odds as to whether a sequel so soon after the first game is really necessary (the original did come out in Japan in 2007, admittedly). All the same, the winning blend of strategy, a fun sense of humour and a graphical update mean *My Lord!? 2* should be a decent distraction.

WDIDTDTML!?2 is being developed by Acquire. Check out www.holybadman.com for more details.



A SEQUEL? SO SOON?

Could a quickfire release harm the game?

ASIDE FROM THE few changes mentioned in the main text, there isn't actually a huge amount to distinguish *My Lord!? 2* from the original (lawyer-baiting) *Badman*. More of a good thing is welcome, but when it's being released so soon after the first it's hard to get excited about. This is likely to be one where how much we can recommend it is dictated by price.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It retains the sense of humour from the original, which we're fans of.
- It's always good to keep things more or less exactly the same, right?
- More dungeon-based building on the go is certainly a good thing.
- This time it definitely isn't infringing on intellectual copyrights.

READ ME

Dungeon Keeper 2 remains the best dungeon-er-up game ever made, and while this may be an opinion, it's actually a well-known fact, too.



PREVIEW



FIRST LOOK

● Your character will have around 50 combat animations. He had about three in the first *Two Worlds*.

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST

Two Worlds II

Or is it II Worlds Two?

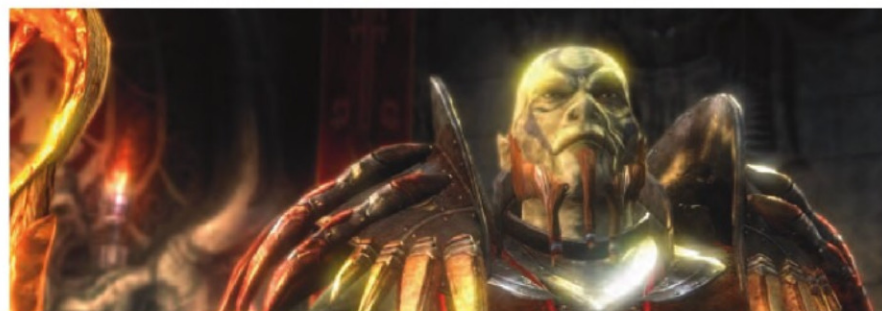
Judging by what we've seen of *Two Worlds II* so far, it is not, repeat *not*, going to replicate the numerous disastrous mistakes made by the original game. If you're not familiar with *Two Worlds*, then all you really need to know is that almost as soon as it was released on the Xbox 360 in 2007, it became a benchmark for bad games. If someone on one of *Play*'s sister 360 magazines reviews a bad game then *Two Worlds* is the game they compare it to in order to establish whether it's merely bad, or whether it's '*Two Worlds* bad'. Few games are really lame enough to attain this exclusive distinction. *Two Worlds* was an ambitious and well-meaning-enough RPG, but it bit off quite a lot more than it could chew and ended up, literally, a laughing stock.

So, it was with some trepidation that we set our eyes on *Two Worlds II*, the series' PlayStation 3 debut, for the first

time. And it was with some relief that we realised that its development is being handled in a very different way to its forebear, and that it's already looking like a far, far better game.

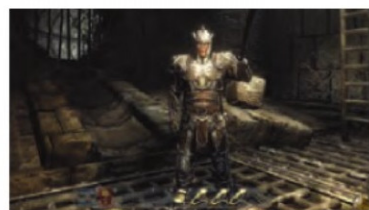
There are probably too many improvements to list here, but we'll try. It looks like a proper current-gen game, it has decent lighting and physics, the script doesn't make you cringe, it uses motion capture instead of jerky, awkward animation and just generally looks like it won't be a horrendous chore to play. Whether it's going to present a realistic challenge to the likes of *Oblivion* and *Dragon Age* like the first one promised and failed to be, remains to be seen, but we are at least feeling cautiously optimistic based on our first impressions, and that's much more than we were expecting.

Two Worlds II is being developed by Reality Pump. Check the website for more details: www.realitypump.pl

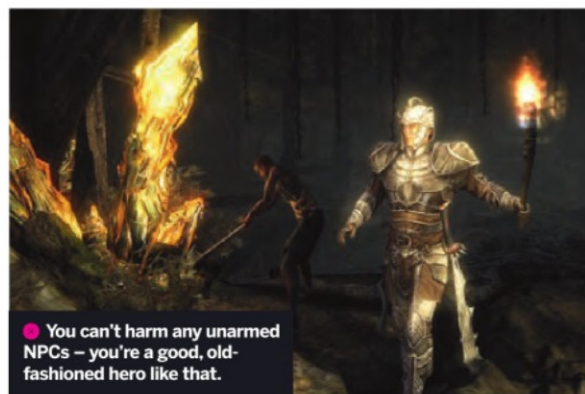
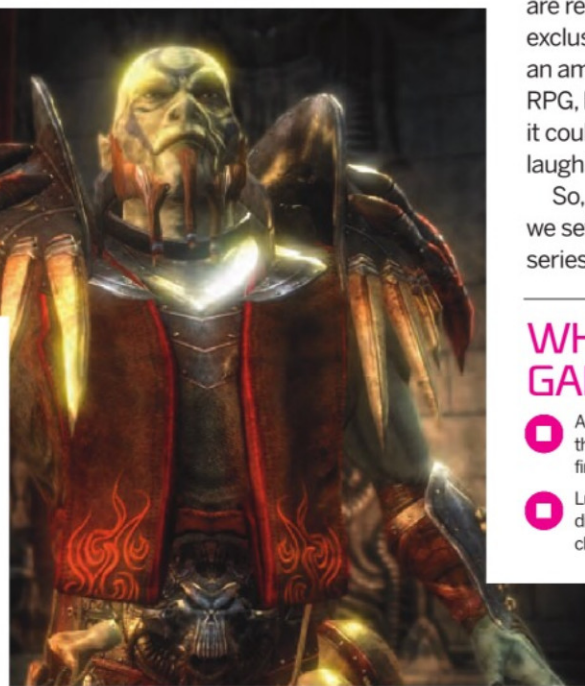


YOU AGAINST THE WORLDS

Two Worlds, three modes, eight players



THE MULTIPLAYER PORTION of *Two Worlds II* has been expanded greatly, and comes in three distinct types of gameplay. There's Village mode, where you manage a village so that it can produce useful resources to be used in other multiplayer modes, and occasionally invite players to your village to help with quests. Then there's a co-op mode, which tells the story of the seven-year gap between *Two Worlds* and *Two Worlds II*'s campaigns. Finally there's an Arena mode where players can fight each other individually or in teams.



● You can't harm any unarmed NPCs – you're a good, old-fashioned hero like that.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Already looking more finished than the first one, and it's not finished yet.
- Forsooth, mayhap the dialogue won't be laughably archaic this time.
- Ludicrous depth – millions of different spell combinations to choose from.
- TopWare is involved in the game's production to ensure mistakes aren't repeated.

READ ME

Much of the motion capturing in *Two Worlds II* was done using Olympic athletes, most of whom are martial artists of various disciplines.

● *Two Worlds II* is notably darker and more violent than its somewhat twee predecessor.



● The AI is still being tweaked at the moment, but Black Rock is promising that it will be smart enough to learn your playing style.

RELEASE DATE: 21 MAY

Split/Second: Velocity

Blowing up out of all proportion

We've spent quite a lot of time playing *Split/Second* already, but only racing specific tracks in isolation. Until now, we didn't really have a sense of how the game would be structured, how it would progress as we'd played through it in single-player mode and how various aspects of it would be linked together. But Disney recently ran us through some of this stuff, as well as letting us try out some tracks and modes we hadn't seen before.

Given that within its own fiction *Split/Second* is a TV show, it seems appropriate that the main single-player mode takes the form of a season broken down into 12 episodes, which are in turn broken down into six unique events each, bringing the total number of events to 72. Not all of these events are straight-up races. Some are Time Trials with the twist that the environment is exploding all around you throughout. Then there's Elimination, which we assume is like Elimination modes in other racing games, hopefully with an explosive twist of its own. Survival is another mode – one we got the chance to

try out for ourselves – which is quite different to the others. You essentially race around a simple, short circuit where the only other vehicles are slow, drone cars and big trucks loaded with blue and red barrels. Overtaking the cars and trucks will earn you points and extra time, but the trucks are out to stop you doing that by dropping barrels into your path and slamming you into the side of the track. It's a simple idea, but good fun, and we can see it being addictive trying to beat your personal best. But it lacks the trademark environmental destruction of the rest of the game. We also saw the name of a mode called Air Strike on an in-game menu, but Disney just pretended that didn't exist. Intriguing.

We tried some new tracks in the Power Plant and Downtown areas of the city, and each was easily on a par with the Airport and Docks tracks we'd tried before. We only wished we could have played them more to really master the Power-Plays of each. Ah well, only another month to go.

Split/Second is being developed by Black Rock Studio. Check the website for more details: www2.disney.co.uk/disneyinteractivestudios/blackrockstudio

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Like the best games, *Split/Second* gets better the more you play it.
- Demolition derby with a very literal interpretation of 'demolition'.
- Might be the PS3's most intense racer yet.
- Smart, aggressive AI keeps you on your toes.

READ ME

While *Split/Second* doesn't take place in an open-world, all of the racetracks are part of the same huge city environment.



● If you activate a Power-Play but don't see it for some reason, you can rewind time and watch a replay.



SECOND CARS

No real-life cars because it's not real life

THERE ARE 30 cars in *Split/Second* divided into different classes with different handling characteristics. You earn credits through the season to buy new, better cars and add upgrades to the ones you already have. None of them are based on real models, with this bringing the advantage that Black Rock can smash them up as much as it likes.



● The visuals and audio both adapt in subtle ways as you race so as to really get your adrenaline going.



RELEASE DATE: MARCH

Joe Danger

Danger is also his middle name

What is this? Some kind of spy romp?

No, but we can see why you might think so with a name like *Joe Danger*. This is actually a stunt bike game with arcade tendencies. You accelerate with **R2** and balance on the bike by pulling left and right on the left analogue.

A little bit like that Xbox Live Arcade game then? Not interested.

Whoa there! Don't get ahead of yourself. This is nothing like that game. *Joe Danger* isn't looking to break you with its demands of precision and hours spent attempting a single jump. It's about collecting stars, coins and letters that spell out 'Danger'.

Is it not a little silly then?

Not at all. This is classic arcade gaming like your dad used to play. Think *Excitebike* mixed with *Sonic* by way of *Tony Hawk*. It's got its tongue stuck firmly in its cheek with death-defying leaps over shark-infested tanks, rows of school buses and suchlike.

I'm having trouble picturing how all that fits together.

Well, every level is a bit different, but the main point is to get from the beginning to the end with as few faults as possible as quickly as you can. Then you've got various collectables like small stars, coins and the 'Danger' letters.

Collect all of these items and you can expect a big score at the end.

So it's a casual game then?

No. There's certainly nothing to put off less experienced gamers, but *Joe Danger* is promising plenty of challenge for the hardcore PS3 crowd. The truly skilled will also be looking to pull off tricks and link them into combos by doing tricky wheelies in-between (not unlike *Tony Hawk's* games and their manuals). That should see some significant score boosting as well as offering you the kind of challenge you crave. There are also some more precise, straight speed challenges that throw obstacles in your way that you'll need to leap over and duck under, just to keep things interesting.

But who is Hello Games anyway? What has it ever done?

This will be the first game to be produced by Hello Games, but the team has worked on games like *Burnout*, *Virtua Tennis* and *Geometry Wars: Galaxies*, which should give them a good footing for this kind of arcade title for PSN. Plus, if you don't like their levels you can always make your own.

Joe Danger is being developed by the four fine chaps that make up Hello Games and they can be found at www.joe-danger.com



● If you don't like the tracks on offer then you can create your own.

CHILD'S PLAY

Joe Danger loves to play in the sandbox

AS IS THE current trend, *Joe Danger* lets you create your own levels and challenges in its sandbox mode. Here you have all the tools that the developer has been using to make its own levels and you can play them as you make them to get jumps positioned properly. In later stages you can edit the main challenges, too.



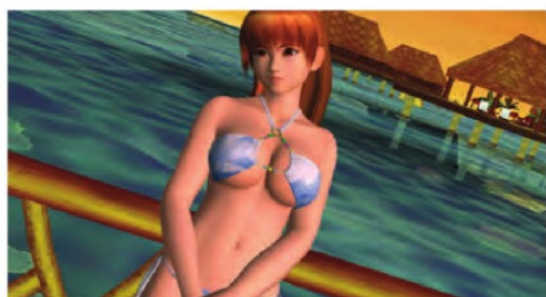
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It oozes retro gaming love from the days when games were games and men still boys.
- Classic 'just one more go' addictiveness. You just won't want to put the pad down.
- Plenty of different challenges to keep the gameplay fresh for as long as possible.
- Really simple to pick up level creation that should spawn some superb tracks online.

READ ME

The Hello Games team came up with the idea for *Joe Danger* while playing around with some old toys. An Evel Knievel doll and bike took up most of their time and *Joe Danger* was born.

THE LATEST ON... Games that aren't out yet but have new information, or something



DEAD OR ALIVE PARADISE

Publisher: Tecmo Koei **Developer:** Team Ninja
ETA: Out now **Format:** PSP

YES, YOU READ that right – it's out now. Unfortunately, thanks to the miracles of writing a magazine and not getting code, we haven't been able to play this yet. Thus, we are unable to make 'palm of your hand' jokes, comment on Lei Fang's bosoms or see if there actually is a game in this PSP version of *DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball*. Shame.



ALPHA PROTOCOL

Publisher: Sega **Developer:** Obsidian Entertainment
ETA: May **Format:** PS3

IT'S BEEN PUSHED back and pushed back some more, but Obsidian's upcoming spy RPG has finally got a solid release date: 28 May. Aside from this morsel of goodness, the dev has also released a few new details of weapons and gadgets in the game – the radio mimic in particular looks really rather espionagey. It makes us quite happy.



BRINK

Publisher: Bethesda Softworks **Developer:** Splash Damage
ETA: September **Format:** PS3

A RUMOURED DATE – revealed through a *Brink* competition, no less – put the game's release around the September mark, but Bethesda was quick to point this out as "speculative". Still, new developer diaries on the Bethesda blog are working their magic getting us pumped once more, filling everyone in on the setting, the Ark and everything else in *Brink*'s background.

NEW GAMES... New newness all up in your grill



TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED 2

Publisher: Namco Bandai **Developer:** Eden Games
ETA: TBC **Format:** PS3

THE PS3 NEVER got a taste of the original *Test Drive Unlimited*'s online glory. All this will be put right when we see the release of the sequel, which is set to bring a whole new island to tear up, vehicle damage, weather effects and a full day-night cycle. Single-player can be played off or online, and it's all sounding like exactly what Eden needed to do with a sequel to 2006's overlooked gem.



LARA CROFT AND THE GUARDIAN OF LIGHT

Publisher: Square Enix **Developer:** Crystal Dynamics
ETA: TBC **Format:** PSN

WE'VE BEEN WHINING for a while that the *Tomb Raider* series is in need of a reboot. It seems Crystal Dynamics agrees. The latest in the series is a top-down, arcadey shooter played from an isometric viewpoint. It's also download only, offers a co-op mode and seems packed with all the tombs and traps you'd expect, even if the 'Tomb 'Raider' aspect isn't in the title any more.



VANQUISH

Publisher: Sega **Developer:** Platinum Games
ETA: Winter 2010 (Japan) **Format:** PS3

PLATINUM HASN'T MADE a bad game yet, in our eyes. And while *Bayonetta* was a bit 'wrong' on PS3, the same surely can't happen with *Vanquish* – Platinum's latest game and developed with PS3 as its lead platform. Shinji Mikami, father of *Resi Evil*, is directing this one and is looking to "inject the extreme pace of an action game into a shooter". It looks interesting, though, and the Platinum moniker means we're excited.



SOCOM 4: US NAVY SEALs

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer: Zipper Interactive **ETA:** October **Format:** PS3

MARCH BROUGHT US the most expected announcement of all time when it was revealed that Zipper would be making a new *SOCOM* title for PS3. The tactical, squad-based shooter is sure to be more of the same, only this time set in a 'South Asian country'. It will be interesting to see how much Zipper continues to support *MAG* with DLC and other content with the added burden of developing a whole new game.



SHAUN WHITE SKATEBOARDING

Publisher: Ubisoft **Developer:** Ubisoft Montreal
ETA: TBC **Format:** TBC

APPARENTLY THE STRANGE, ginger-looking bloke can do more than just snowboard. We hear he's also rather nifty with a skateboard, which is probably why Ubisoft has decided to bring out a skateboarding title to compete with *Tony Hawk* and *Skate*. We know very little about it – in fact, we don't even know what formats it's coming to, nor do we have any screens. Still, it's welcome for a genre to have more competition.



LORD OF THE RINGS: WAR IN THE NORTH

Publisher: Warner Bros. **Developer:** Snowblind Studios
ETA: 2011 **Format:** PS3

AFTER SEVERAL FAILED attempts to keep the *Lord Of The Rings* brand ticking over almost a decade after Peter Jackson's *Fellowship Of The Ring*, it would've been easy to drop the franchise. However, Warner is determined to keep Tolkien alive on PS3 and so this action RPG from Snowblind Studios offers a spin-off tale of the war against Mordor.



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REVIEWS

Playing bad games so you don't have to



Dan Howdle

Reviewed: *Last Rebellion*

Now that the bitter, cold winter has thawed, Dan has decided to start walking to work. If it gets really hot over the summer, he might start swimming into work. He also said something about slippers made of seagulls because seagulls float. We don't really understand Dan any more. Like, look at what he's currently playing. It's inexplicable. He's not even using it as a sleep aid either. He likes it.

currently playing: *White Knight Chronicles*

on review



72 GTA: Episodes From Liberty City PS3

Easy riders



74 Yakuza 3 PS3

Enter the dragon



76 Resonance Of Fate

PS3

Role models



80 Half-Minute Hero

PSP

Brief encounters

the rest

78 Prison Break: The Conspiracy PS3

79 Last Rebellion PS3

81 Dante's Inferno PSP

82 Eye Of Judgment: Legends PSP

82 echoshift PSP





Ian Dransfield

Reviewed: *Grand Theft Auto: Episodes From Liberty City*, *Yakuza 3*, *Resonance Of Fate*, *Half-Minute Hero*

Ian went to America for the first time this month. While he was there he helped the South to rise again, but only so he could then crush them because slavery really isn't cool. He's since changed his name to Ianbraham Lincian and grown one of those beards that looks like a big chinstrap. He also went to Canada.

currently playing: *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*



Jonathan Gordon

Reviewed: *Prince Of Persia*, *Red Dead Redemption*, *Mafia II*, *Enslaved*, *Joe Danger*

Reviewing duties were spread over just three writers this month, so we had to drag Jon out of his news cave and display him proudly here because he wrote a bunch of previews. The picture on the left was taken when he first started working here... before the news cave. These days he has long hair, never smiles and has an acute fear of daylight.

currently playing: *FIFA 09*



Gavin Mackenzie

Reviewed: *Super Street Fighter IV*, *Prison Break*, *Dante's Inferno*, *echosift*

Gav is still in touch with former **Play** art editor, Justyn Chan – remember him? No, thought not – and this month he met up with him and his new girlfriend – a former finalist on *America's Next Top Model*. We've written some unlikely stories in the Reviewer Panel in the past, but we swear this one, despite being the least probable thing ever, is actually true.

currently playing: *Heavy Rain*



K.O.
25

CPU



C. Viper

RELEASE DATE: 30 APRIL

Super Street Fighter IV

An old-fashioned game of fighting with sticks



DETAILS

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
Capcom
Price
£29.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Beat-'em-up
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network,
Downloadable content,
DualShock 3, Dolby
Digital 5.1
Age Rating
12
Website
www.streetfighter.com

Part of *Street Fighter IV*'s genius is that, while its initial learning curve can seem very steep to anyone used to the relatively button-bash friendly delights of *Tekken* or *Dead Or Alive*, the breadth of its appeal is huge. From the novice who can just about pull off a Dragon Punch on a good day to the world champion raking in thousands of dollars in tournament prize money every year, anyone can play and enjoy *Street Fighter IV*. That huge gap between the most casual and

most hardcore players is widening all the time – the most hardcore *Street Fighter* player today will be even more hardcore by tomorrow – yet still *Street Fighter IV* continues to span it with apparent ease.

That gap does make reviewing a new version of *SFIV* tricky, as players at different points on the sliding scale want to know different things. For example, a hardcore player might want to know that if Ryu juggles his opponent with an EX Dragon Punch that he can Focus Attack Dash Cancel into an Ultra Combo from it, while a less hardcore player might want to know what all that even means, while an even less hardcore player might not care as long as Ryu's new Ultra Combo looks really, really cool, which it does. If we tried to write a piece that was all reviews to all *Street Fighter* players we'd tie ourselves in more knots than Dhalsim at the World Twister Championships. So we won't.

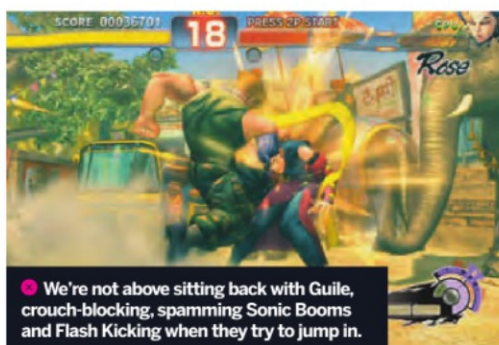
We also won't attempt to write a super hardcore review that emphasises the significance and importance of each minor tweak and assesses the impact every single one has on the overall balance of the game. Even if we were hardcore enough to do that with any real authority, we imagine the readers who'd appreciate it would be an elite minority who are set on buying the game anyway. So we're going to aim this review at the 'on the fence' crowd, the curious, the tempted,

It's better than Street Fighter IV, so it's the best fighting game ever

the unsure and the 'somewhere in the middle'. If you're hardcore, you should buy it. If you're casual, you probably shouldn't. Everyone else, read on...

Let's get the most simple point out of the way first: *Super Street Fighter IV* is better than *Street Fighter IV*, which was arguably the best fighting game ever, so *Super Street Fighter IV* is now the best fighting game ever. Compared to *SFIV*, it's bigger, faster, slicker, better balanced and even more fun. So why the slightly lower score? Well, the score is not just a measure of awesomeness, but a measure of recommendation. While we'd still consider *SSFIV* a must-have, we're not about to encourage you to buy it with quite the same rabid enthusiasm as we did *Street Fighter IV* because there's a lot of old *Street Fighter IV* content being

REVIEW



● We're not above sitting back with Guile, crouch-blocking, spamming Sonic Booms and Flash Kicking when they try to jump in.

➤ reused here and for that reason *Super Street Fighter IV* isn't likely to bowl you over quite as hard as its non-super forebear did. That said, it's still the best game that's not a sequel, not a re-release but something in-between you'll ever have played.

So what's new? Lots of things actually. Capcom wasn't lying when it said there was too much piled in here to be DLC. *Super Street Fighter IV* isn't just an expansion dressed up as a full game in an attempt to justify a bigger price tag. Far from it. In fact, we reckon that if you don't have either version of *Street Fighter IV* yet and you're wondering which to go for, then you should plump for *SSFIV* over *SFIV* even if the older game is likely to be about half the price by

HAKAN VS JURI

The battle of the new characters

Juri lost her eye when she was kidnapped by Shadaloo as a teenager. S.I.N. then replaced it with a mysterious Feng Shui-powered device.

Hat or hair? We think it's hair that's been matted into that weird shape, mainly because it's the same colour as his moustache, but we're really not sure.

Hakan loves his daughters even more than he loves oil. And they love him, too, which is why they wear hats that look like his hair (we think).

There are a number of one-leg stances in Taekwondo, but they're more for exercise than combat. Juri uses one in combat because she's cool.

There are very few punch attacks in Juri's repertoire – even her fireballs come from her feet – so she mainly uses her hands for gesturing in an evil way.

When he fights, Hakan covers his entire body in olive oil, in the style of a Yaglı güres wrestler. He can even give himself an extra coating during a match.

AND THE WINNER IS... JURI

Oil wrestling might provide some amusing comic relief, but for speed, technique and depth, Juri is easily the best of *Super Street Fighter IV*'s 100 per cent new characters.



● Blanka's crouching heavy punch remains our favourite of all *Street Fighter* moves because we are simpletons who fear change.



● Strictly speaking, that ought to have killed him outright, but we won't quibble.



now. Value for money is not a problem here at all.

The most substantial addition is that of ten new characters – eight that are new to *SFIV* and two completely new ones designed specifically for *Super Street Fighter IV* (see Hakan vs Juri boxout). While some will bemoan the fact that Capcom has neglected to resurrect their own personal favourite *Super*, *Alpha* or *3rd Strike* character, we can't really fault the selection of *old new* characters. Each era of the *Street Fighter* series is well represented as are about as wide a selection of fighting styles as you could hope for from just eight characters.

Your Supers, namely T Hawk and Dee Jay, hark back to a simpler time in *Street Fighter* history, when a Special Move really was special. As such, they're easier to pick up than most and have small selections of simple, but individually effective moves. There's less scope for long, technical combo strings than with other characters, but they can still be very effective in the right hands.

The *3rd Strike* contingent, that's Ibuki, Makoto and Dudley, are all much more

Isn't likely to bowl you over quite as hard as its non-super forebear did

at the hardcore end of the scale. While most *Street Fighter* characters can be described in terms of which other *Street Fighter* characters they are like (eg Hakan is like Zangief crossed with Darun only much slipperier), these three have very individual, very specific sets of moves that can seem a bit useless when used on their own. But when used in combination with other moves and with *Street Fighter IV*'s deep, interwoven mesh of Focus Attacks, EX Attacks, dashes, cancels and counters they can become lethal. Catering to the experts, these characters are disciplines designed to be *learned* through very focused, very patient practice. They're the best showcase on offer of just how deep and complex and ingenious *Super Street Fighter IV* is, but then they're not really for everyone.

The Alphas then – Adon, Cody and Guy – sit somewhere in the middle – not too simple, not too technical. Much of the more technical stuff they can do is

In this series



Street Fighter IV Issue 176
Only scores higher because it was all-new when released. The *Super* version is better. 95%



relatively obvious and 'built-in', so you don't have to figure out how their various skills fit together for yourself to the same degree as with the 3rd Strikers. At the same time, even their basic combos will sometimes require precision timing and/or multiple quick-fire button presses.

Despite the clear distinctions between different characters with different roots, everyone seems to blend together remarkably well, notably better than in previous Capcom culture clashes like *Marvel Vs Capcom* or *Capcom Vs SNK*. This is in part due to how well each has been individually adapted and tuned, but more than anything it's testament to just what a solid foundation *Street Fighter IV* is. And it's even more solid with over a year's worth of tweaks to a whole host of bits and pieces going into *Super Street Fighter IV*, making it a much more balanced game.

New new characters Hakan and Juri slip comfortably into the mix as well, and not just because one of them is coated head-to-toe in premium edible oil. Hakan is fun to play as, but is about more than just comic relief if you put in the hard work to figure him



out. Juri, though, is a truly exemplary *Street Fighter* character, who we're sure is destined to become a firm favourite among the casual and hardcore alike. She's easy to pick up and effective in the hands of a novice, but has layers upon layers of depth that really let the experts flex their creative muscles as well as the ones in their hands. And that's *Street Fighter* all over really.

There have been numerous improvements to the online multiplayer portion of the game, too (which we'll cover next issue), but offline multiplayer is what *Street Fighter* is really about and if you have a local friend or group of friends who you're about evenly matched with then *Super Street Fighter IV* is essential. If not, then you need to get some better friends, then get *Super Street Fighter IV*.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

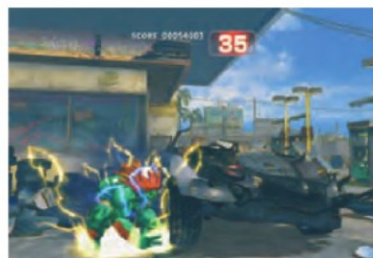
The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best version of the best game of its type ever made.

90%

Super Street Fighter IV

KILLING ALL CARS

The Bonus Rounds are back



IF THERE'S ONE thing less fun than hitting someone in the face over and over again, it's smashing up cars and barrels. Long-time *Street*

Fighter fans will no doubt welcome the return of the Bonus Rounds but, setting warm nostalgia aside for a moment, they get old pretty quick. Capcom's well

aware of this, though, and has thoughtfully included an option to turn them off altogether, but only after you've played them at least once each.





You can fight the law, but in a situation like this you're going to lose.

The whole of Liberty City is still available to explore.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



DETAILS

Publisher
Rockstar
Developer
Rockstar North
Price
£34.99
Players
1-16
Genre
Sandbox
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, DualShock 3
Age Rating
18
Website
www.rockstargames.com/episodesfromlibertycity/

Grand Theft Auto: Episodes From Liberty City

The American Dream re-re-re-born

Those who have been living under a massive rock in the centre of the Earth (in an alternate dimension – in the past) have probably missed out on all of this 'GTA IV and its DLC' thing, so here's a very quick primer. *Grand Theft Auto IV* set very high standards with its incredible refinements of sandbox gaming (98% in **Play**, no less), and following the massively successful original came two bits of downloadable content. These were exclusive to Xbox 360 for a while, but are now available on PlayStation 3 – and they don't need the original game to play them: you get the whole of Liberty City to explore whether you have *GTA IV* or not.

The first bit of DLC comes in the shape of *The Lost And Damned*, which follows the trials of one Johnny Klebitz – a member of The Lost Motorcycle Club and man of criminal, though honourable, intentions. Johnny has been acting president of the club for a while, but the previous boss – just out of rehab – returns to the scene to make things a bit less stable for

The Lost MC. What this translates to is your typical batch of *GTA*-style missions: go here, fetch that, drive here, shoot him – it doesn't really bring anything new to the table outside of a few general tweaks, but that's not a bad thing in the slightest. As a biker, Johnny finds it much easier to control motorcycles. This means you will spend most of your 12-15 hours playing this portion of the game on two wheels rather than four, though that's not to say you can't just jack any car you feel like – you can. It's an interesting dynamic and while it doesn't alter the playing field as far as *GTA* titles go, it's nice to mix things up a little. Aside from story missions, players can participate in more incidental side quests like bike races and gang wars. All in all, it's a great package.

The second (substantial) batch of DLC included in *Episodes From Liberty City* is *The Ballad Of Gay Tony*. In *Gay Tony*, players control one Luis Lopez as he serves his role as business partner/muscle for the ageing nightclub (ex-)mogul 'Gay' Tony Prince. It's no surprise that this involves heated debates with planning officials, discussions with bar staff as to how they should serve cocktails and regular re-stocking of Toilet Duck. Alright, so that's a lie: it involves a lot of violence, drugs, sex and general bad behaviour. Luis' adventures, however, bring a few new elements into play that shake things up at least a bit. Base jumping (parachuting from buildings) makes a splash throughout and pops up in a few missions, and players are free to pursue the 'hobby' whenever they feel like it (and

have a parachute). Just as with *The Lost And Damned*, the basic dynamic of *GTA* remains resolutely un-shook up, bar additions like replayable missions and an underground fight club. But when the basic dynamic is this good, it really is irrelevant. *Gay Tony* also has a few incidental missions, just as in *The Lost And Damned*, in the shape of drug wars – another distraction lasting about 30 missions, and fun enough to be a worthwhile addition.

This standalone expansion offers a few new radio stations apart from the original, with

It would be ridiculous to say *Episodes From Liberty City* is anything other than essential

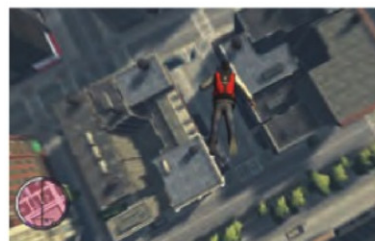
hundreds of new songs to go along with it (though the loss of the original tracks). There are also new multiplayer modes for you to mess about in and a few differences, added weapons and suchlike, thrown in to help things feel that bit more fresh. We did have some issues with *Episodes From Liberty City*, but these came down to personal preference more than anything. The lead characters in both games came across as rather unlikeable, owing to their ruthless, unapologetic criminality. It's difficult to have sympathy for them, basically. Other than that, the mission structure, generally speaking, isn't going to set the world on fire: this is *Grand Theft Auto* by (cop killing) numbers.

But hey: exceptional cut-scenes, mid-mission checkpoints, some great characters/acting and (while starting to show its age) a fantastically realised world are all things that

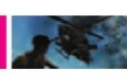
EXTRA, EXTRA! But why change the near-perfect?

THE EXTRAS INCLUDED in both *The Lost And Damned* and *The Ballad Of Gay Tony* don't make *GTA* a completely different game, as we mentioned, but they do offer tweaks and additions we feel the game needed. Mid-mission checkpoints, for example, are a godsend – no longer do you have to go all the way back to the beginning of a particularly long mission just because some idiot taxi driver pulled out in front of you and caused you to flip your car. Instead, you can start from a (usually)

well-positioned checkpoint. Reduced time wasting, reduced frustration, increased enjoyment. Simple.



Or you could try



Saints Row 2 Issue 172
A fantastically silly playground to lose yourself in, though unpolished. 79%

Grand Theft Auto: Episodes From Liberty City



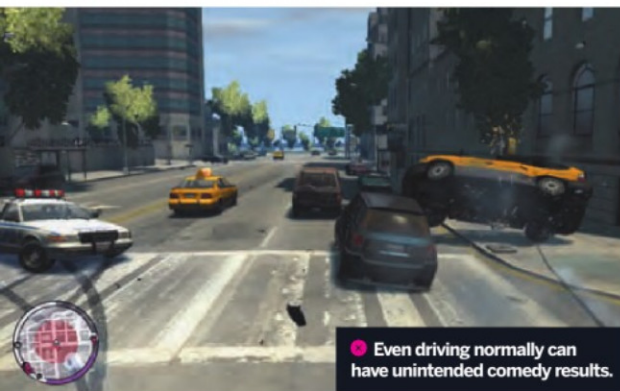
You can still get some striking vistas in the game.



The Lost MC in all their morally questionable glory.



As with GTA IV, mobile gun shops are available through chums.



Even driving normally can have unintended comedy results.



The Lost MC clubhouse is in need of a dusting, we think.



Shotgun drive-bys = a recipe for hilarity.

make us forget about these minor complaints and just get on with throwing things off rooftops or piling up as many cars as we can on a busy intersection.

It would be ridiculous to say *Episodes From Liberty City* is anything other than essential. It's been a long time coming to PS3 and we do have some minor niggles with it, plus it's hard to ignore the package as a whole feels ever-so-slightly dated. But, having said that, *Grand Theft Auto IV* is still one of the finest games ever released, so a couple of dozen more hours playing time is nothing but absolutely, completely and totally welcome.

Ian Dransfield

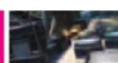
VERDICT

Two fine expansions, bundled together and without the need for *GTA IV* to play them. What more could you want? *Episodes From Liberty City* is a great addition to anyone's PS3 library and comes highly recommended.

94%



Rooftop: check. Dozen grenades: check. Muck about: check.



PS3

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Yakuza 3



DETAILS

Publisher

Sega

Developer

In-house

Price

£49.99

Players

1-2

Genre

RPG/Action-adventure

Supports

1080p, 1080i, 720p,

Downloadable content,

DualShock 3

Age Rating

18

Website

www.sega.co.uk/
yakuza3

Proof that enough internet-begging reaps rewards

We originally instructed you to 'cross your fingers for a PAL release' when we reviewed the Japanese version of *Ryu Ga Gotoku 3*, as the previous entries to the series – *Yakuza 1* and *2* – had both made their way over here. Well, it only took more than a year of crossed fingers, but we finally have an English version of *Yakuza 3*. Has the wait been worth it? Were the legions of internet users right to demand a Western release for the game? Well, yes. It isn't the pinnacle of gaming, but *Yakuza 3* is a fine way to waste a couple of dozen hours.

Picking up immediately after the events of the second game, we see Kazuma Kiryu saying his goodbyes to his friends in and around Tokyo before leaving for Okinawa, where he opens an orphanage with Haruka, his almost-adopted daughter-type. Safe to say, the game isn't just an orphanage simulator – though having said that you would be surprised as to exactly how long you do spend away from the big city lights,

taking part in some astonishingly mundane tasks. The first five or six hours are spent in and around the beautiful, sunny Okinawan region of Ryukyugai, with Kazuma helping out the kids in his orphanage and trying to hold off the threat of eviction – it's the kind of storyline Mr T would be involved in on *The A-Team*, if we're honest. Helping to tame an unruly dog, carrying ice cream for a group of tourists, playing baseball and sorting out a bullying situation (unfortunately not by beating up children) is weaved with the standard *Yakuza* style

of running around a town getting into fights.

And oh, the fights. As ever, they play like a fast-paced arcade brawler and offer up some suitably brutal, downright *violent* combat. We're not talking ripping out spines or anything, but there is some wince-inducing face stamping littering some of these scuffles, and the blood-splattered fists and suits just make you glad this is all happening in a game.

Though it can be a bit jarring to brutally assault three suited members of the local yakuza only for them to offer some "fine charcoal" as reparations.

If you have fun in the opening hours of the game then this will be ramped up a fair amount when Kazuma is forced to return to Kamurocho (Tokyo), as the game really gets a lot better. Those of you who don't enjoy the opening plod, however, either won't get

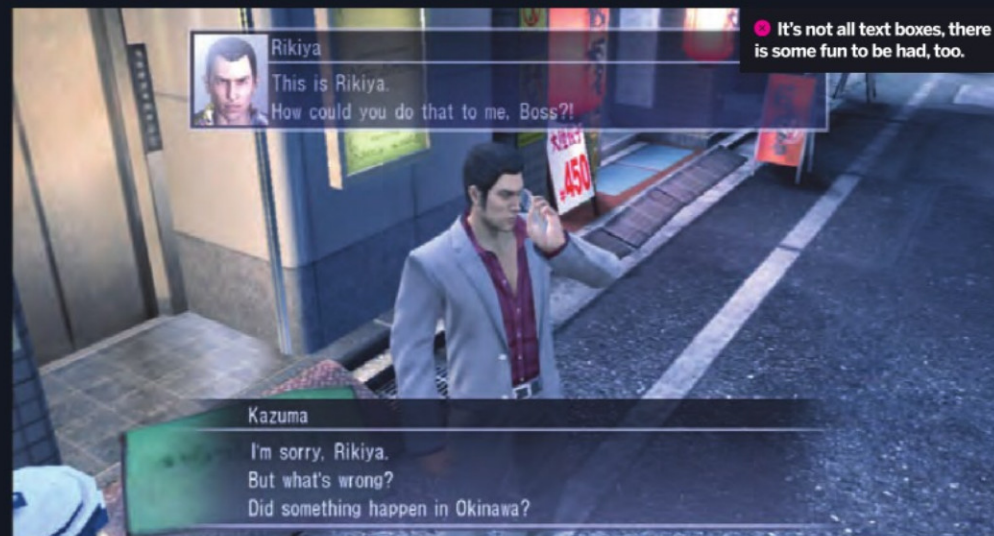
It's the kind of storyline Mr T would be involved in on *The A-Team*

this far or will be relieved more than anything to see the pace and story get a bit more interesting. Regardless of how you end up feeling, it is at this point where the story kicks it up a gear and Kazuma reverts to type, sorting out the local yakuza dealings and generally getting into a lot of scrapes. To go from helping a little boy dress well to being shot at with a minigun in a matter of hours is

PASTKUZA

Missed the first two games?
Fret not

THERE IS A whole console generation and a few years between the last release of *Yakuza* and this one, so it's no surprise there may be many of you out there who have no idea what's going on. Sega has you covered, though, as you can watch two lengthy movies from the main menu that fill you in on everything that happened in the previous two games. It's also a nice point of comparison to see that the game did look really good for a PS2 title and that it has, in fact, also taken a massive graphical step-up for PS3.



It's not all text boxes, there is some fun to be had, too.

Previously...
in Play

IMPORT REVIEW Issue 178

"Yakuza's combat is all about re-creating the knockabout fun of a bar-room brawl." 82%



• The faux-Tokyo district is still as bright and vibrant as ever.



• Can you tell it's a Sega game?



• This bloke carries his blurry sword wherever he goes.

• This may look suspiciously like the first game. That's because it is suspiciously like the first game.



Date
I'll look into that man in the picture.
You go after Kanda.
He's our most likely suspect.



• The combat is satisfyingly brutal at times.



• Most of the objects here can be used as weapons.

just one of many ways that the game really grabs your attention.

Throughout both the slower opening and the better second act (as we've decided to call it), players can take part in countless mini-games, sub-missions and other such fun asides. Sega actually took the decision to remove a fair bit of content from the Western release, meaning we don't have hostess bars and actually have a few less distractions overall. While this is a rather annoying move, there is still a great deal to lose yourself in should you feel the need: arcade games, UFO catchers, golf, fishing, karaoke, blogging (yes, *blogging*) and more standard side quests make up the general procrastinations on offer.

While in parts it looks really rather nice, generally speaking *Yakuza 3* does look a bit dated: animation is stiff, detail levels aren't incredible and it won't drop the jaws of passers-by. It's a bit unfair to have a go about this kind of thing, as the game is over a year old now, but it's also an issue that could be raised with the time it took for it to come out over here. But that's a whole

other can of worms. Voice work seems very good, though to be honest we're not that sure as it's all in Japanese, and subtitles don't really fill us in as to whether this is good voice acting or not. Though at least it means we don't have to put up with another Nolan North vocal vehicle.

If it had arrived in a more timely fashion we would have been more receptive to *Yakuza 3* – but that doesn't really bring the game down in our estimations. If anything, we're impressed with Sega listening to the fans and bringing the game to the West. However, the (admittedly few) omissions made come as a bit of a slap in the face and is an element we could have done without (or with, whatever).

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It took a great deal of time to get it over here, and it shows. Not only that, but we've had some content cut because we 'couldn't handle it'. Nevertheless, *Yakuza 3* tells a good story and is a fun game.

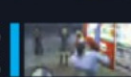
80%



• The plot brings national concerns into the fray.



In this series



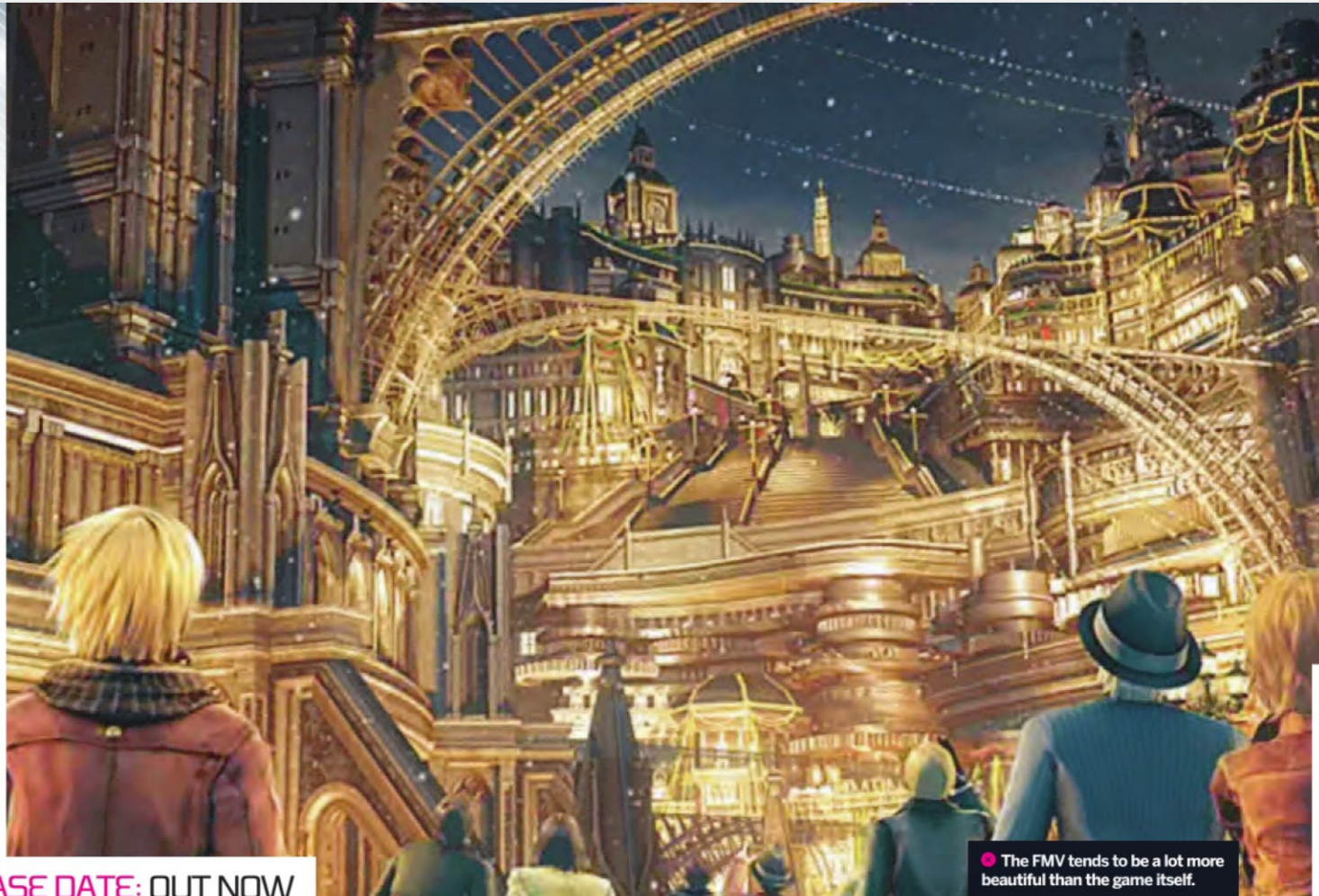
Yakuza 2 Issue 171
It arrived late, but was still a good game. 79%



● Poor choice of hair and 'tache, to be honest.



● These gits spit petrol in your face, like morons.



● The FMV tends to be a lot more beautiful than the game itself.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



DETAILS

Publisher

Sega

Developer

tri-Ace

Price

£49.99

Players

1

Genre

RPG

Supports

720p, DLC,

DualShock 3

Age Rating

16

Website

www.sega.co.uk/

games/resonance-

of-fate

Resonance Of Fate

A JRPG with new ideas? Bullsh...

Consider spending two-and-a-half hours on an RPG and only achieving level five. When you start at level three. There you have our initial experience of *Resonance Of Fate* in full. The combination of a new, complex combat system and a sheer brick wall of difficulty doesn't bode well in the opening stages for tri-Ace's latest RPG, but it *does* bode well for the direction of Japanese RPGs, which have become shockingly stale in recent years.

The story isn't the most standard of RPG fare, but it doesn't exactly break much new ground: Earth in the future, living on a purpose-built city to clean the environment around it, everyone has their own star and blah blah. It just seems to be a reasonably interesting vehicle for some nice haircuts and towns built from cogs. No, the really

interesting aspects come via other elements. The world map, for one, is made up of a series of hexes, most of which require activating before they can be traversed. They can only be activated by collecting hex pieces, which can be picked up through battles, off other characters and so on.

This means that the simple act of wandering around the world of Basel becomes mildly strategic, as you sort through the applicable hex pieces in your possession to unlock new regions of the map. Coloured and base hexes shake things up a bit and add a bit more depth (or an excuse to stop you from getting to an area too soon, naturally), but it never gets too complex, nor does it really get in the way of proceedings.

Elsewhere there are other interesting elements such as being able to save anywhere – temporary saves are created at any point, while normal save points exist. It's a huge step forward for a genre that has

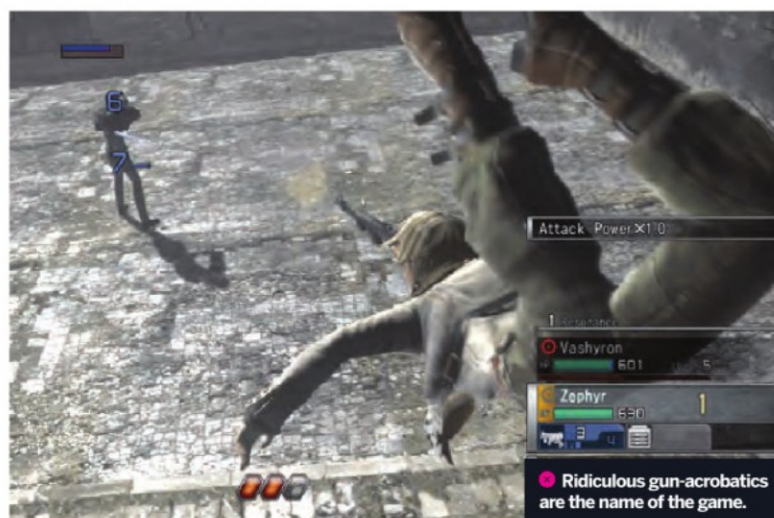
never really taken into account how little time a player may have to actually play. Weapon customisation is another element that comes in from other genres, and adds yet another nice – if ultimately forgettable – touch. Generally speaking, it seems that *Resonance*

The game can be utterly unforgiving even from an early stage

Of Fate has taken on board a fair smattering of Western influences, while retaining a distinctly Japanese feel and never feeling like it's just a ham-fisted imitation of Western gamers' tastes.

The game can be utterly unforgiving at times, even from a very early stage. While it is fortunate that things progress in a speedy and simple fashion, meaning battles are rarely a chore, sudden difficulty spikes can kill off much of the enthusiasm you might have for the game. Standard battles aren't too much hassle once you've got the hang of the combat system, but boss and sub-boss fights can be simply hellish.

Still, as we mentioned, most battles are engaging, even if they can be punishingly difficult for no good reason. This is thanks to the game's battle system, which employs a semi-real-time scheme and numerous tactical choices throughout. While you can't necessarily avoid most attacks – regardless of where you stand, you will be hit by an enemy if you were within their range when they began their attack – placement plays a



● Ridiculous gun-acrobatics are the name of the game.



● Dozens of missions are available throughout.

Bulletin

An Act of Kindness

Reward

★ 3

2000

Metal-Coated Rounds X15

Effective against armor or machinery.

Less useful against soft or organic enemies.

Equip it to a Magazine Case to use.

★ 6 ★ 5

View currently posted missions

★ 46

Previously...
in Play



PREVIEWED Issue 189

"We don't think *Resonance Of Fate* will appeal to an audience much beyond that of tri-Ace's existing franchises"



big part, with different sides of enemies open to assault and cover to use on many of the battle maps. Other strategies come into play with Leader Assaults, which can end a battle in just a few turns by killing the enemy(ies) marked as a leader. Then there are the special powers – Hero and Tri-Attack, namely – which bring even more positional strategy into play. A Hero attack sees the controlled character running in a straight line from one point to another – all the time they are running they can attack. The strategy comes into play with Tri-Attacks: to gain use of them you have to build up Resonance Points, and to build up Resonance Points you have to run *between* your two comrades during a Hero attack. Then you can make your characters run around in an attractive triangle formation, shooting and killing in unison. It's less confusing in the game, trust us, but that's not to say it's easy to get your head around.

It's interesting that tri-Ace has taken such a reasonable step away from the usual JRPG

trappings. While *Resonance Of Fate* is easily recognisable alongside its kin, the game is miles away from something like *Star Ocean* – another tri-Ace production – in that it brings new elements to a rather stale genre and tries something new with its battle system. It isn't completely successful and it will only be truly appreciated by those who will progress through sheer bloody-mindedness, those who can get their head around complex systems quickly or those who are masochists. Still, it's a welcome entry into the annals of JRPGery, which is something we haven't been able to say too often recently.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It can be very hard, but *ROF's* willingness to experiment and shake up elements of JRPGs has impressed us. It's not the new benchmark, but it is a huge step in a refreshing direction.

79%

Resonance Of Fate

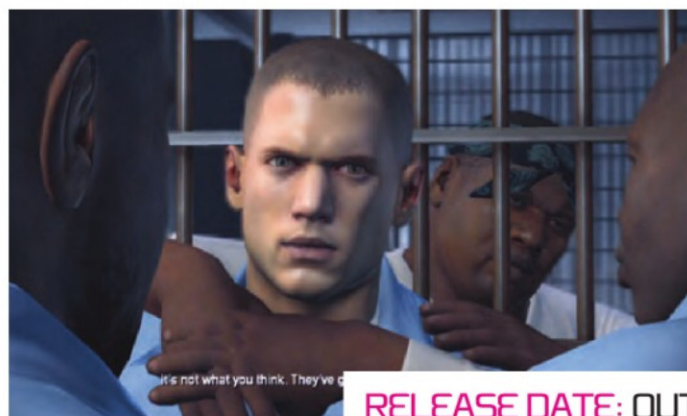


POINTS OF VIEW

An open letter to Nolan North

Dear Mr North,
We respectfully ask for extra consideration as to which games you lend your voice to in future. We do indeed appreciate your verbal acting skills as the character Nathan Drake. However, it has come to the point where we cannot play more than three games without your instantly recognisable oral soundblowing coming out of the speakers. We appreciate you have a family to feed, but this does not change how we feel: for the good of gaming; for the good of our minds; for the good of Nathan Drake – please stop being in almost every game released.
Yours sincerely,
Play Magazine





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

● If it were just five hours of this, it would only be marginally less interesting to play.



DETAILS

Publisher
Deep Silver
Developer
ZootFly
Price
£39.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Stealth/Beat-'em-up
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
16
Website
<http://prisonbreak.deepsilver.co.uk/>

Prison Break: The Conspiracy

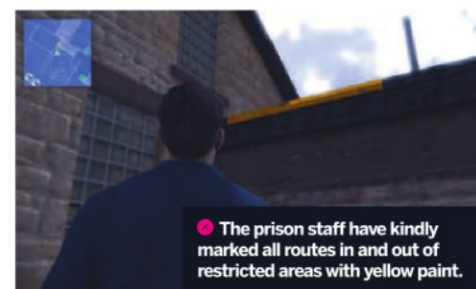
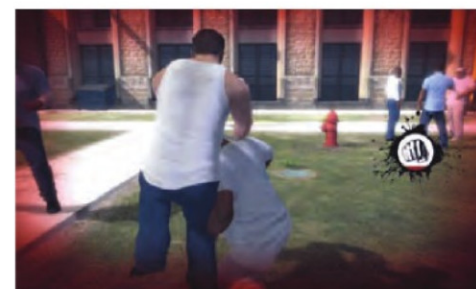
About as exciting and adventurous as, well... being in prison

Prior to playing it, our expectations of this adaptation of a been-and-gone TV series developed by a studio most famous for not making a *Ghostbusters* game and a low-key publisher were not high. And when we did play *Prison Break: The Conspiracy*, it was interesting to note that none of the parties involved appear to have had very high expectations of it either. It doesn't really have many flaws or faults as such, but this is only really because it's too lacking in ambition to even attempt to do something that could go far

wrong. Having said that, even QTEs – surely the least demanding of all game mechanics from a development point of view – prove a bit much for ZootFly, who manages to make them even more annoying than they are by default. If you really must have QTEs then at least ensure that any button-bashing command is immediately followed by a gap and not by another button command. That way our button-bashing won't spill over into the subsequent command because we can't react that quick.

That's about the only genuine annoyance in *Prison Break: The Conspiracy*, though. Everything else is just too basic to illicit any kind of reaction at all, besides boredom. Most of your time is spent wandering towards an orange cross scrawled on your map, which either marks the location of your destination or, more often, a waypoint en route to your destination. At your destination you will usually have a stilted, wooden conversation with someone who will then essentially just give you a new orange cross to go to. On the way, you might have to fight someone, or do some sneaking, or press whatever button pops up on screen in order to avoid some hazard or other. Sorry, we're getting pretty bored just describing it to you.

The fighting is terrible, managing to be awkward and unresponsive despite being ridiculously simple – bashing the (X) button and only bashing the (X) button seems to be the best tactic – and the climbing and platforming is like *Uncharted* would be if everything you had to climb on was painted bright yellow and you were constantly being reminded of which button was 'jump'



● Occasionally you might be lucky enough to witness a laughable fight between two 'AI' prisoners.

● The prison staff have kindly marked all routes in and out of restricted areas with yellow paint.

Just too basic to illicit any kind of reaction at all, besides boredom

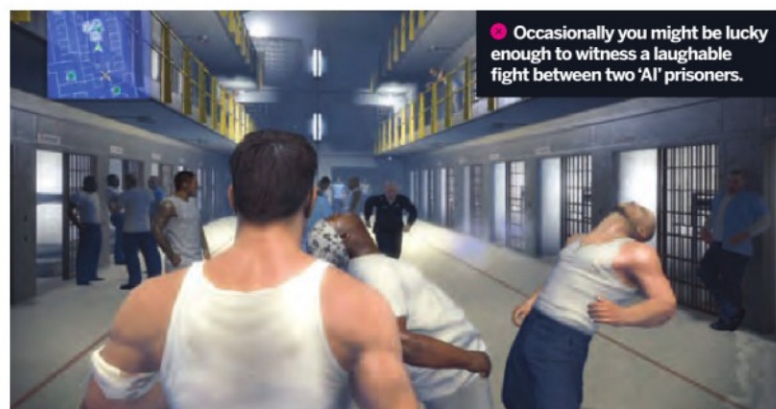
every single step of the way. And the stealth is based purely on preset patterns and routes, with nothing you could really call AI coming into play at all. Even fans of the show shouldn't bother.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

One of the least adventurous adventures we've ever been on, *Prison Break: The Conspiracy* makes your average kids' movie tie-in look like the most hardcore game in the world by comparison. And it doesn't even manage to capture the tense atmosphere of the show, either.

40%



Or you could try



Prisoner Of War Issue 92
Not a classic by any means, but still a darn sight better than *Prison Break*. 79%

PS3

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Last Rebellion

Where defiantly old-fashioned isn't necessarily a good thing...



DETAILS

Publisher
Tecmo Koei
Developer
Nippon Ichi
Price
£44.99
Players
1
Genre
JRPG
Supports
720p
Age Rating
12
Website
www.nisamerica.com/games/lastr

Someone needs to invent a new word for cliché. Its relationship would be what 'stink' is to 'smell', and its use held in reserve for when the object of its fury was of a genus of videogame so hackneyed, that the criticism itself would be as tired and old-hat as what it's attempting to lambaste.

What is it we're supposed to say here? Ah, yes; some kind of a list, where we lament the spiky-haired generic anime characters, the typically silly bad guy – whose evilness, of course, is personified by the slightly different shape of his eyebrows – and how the plot relies on the characters knowing absolutely nothing whatsoever about the world in which they grew all the way up to the ripe old age of 13. That's what we're supposed to say, right? It's just that, despite all that being true to the very last stitch, we're not going to. We're just as tired of pointing out the repeating themes of the genre as you are hearing about them.

And look here: this is the bit where we'd normally turn this whole sorry affair back in on itself with a Clarkson-style 'despite all this it's brilliant', probably ending the sentence with 'in the wuuuuurld'. But we can't do that either, because there's little to nothing to like

07/1092
299/540
30/46

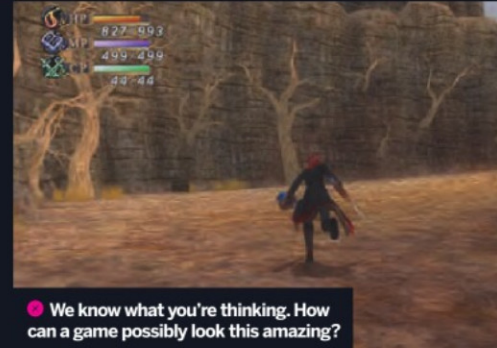
These phials are the only way to charge your CP outside of rare potions and frugal (boring) combat.



about *Last Rebellion*. Its story is derivative nonsense, its script is possibly the worst we've ever come across – incredulously, even worse than in *Star Ocean: The Last Hope* – and in terms of voice acting, someone appears to have inexplicably recorded the first rehearsal.

It looks like a PS2 game. A lot of reviewers have made that claim over the last few years when a current-gen game falls short of the visual cost of entry. That's a shame. Like the boy who cried wolf, such an exaggeration takes the sting out of such an insult when a game really, really does. And *Last Rebellion* will punish you at every turn. It took us nearly seven hours just to get out of the starting area because of an antique save system, unavoidable monster encounters and an unabashed requirement to grind. All of which set us back an hour at a time on numerous occasions.

If there is an upside to *Last Rebellion*, it's got to be the combat, which addictively relies



We know what you're thinking. How can a game possibly look this amazing?

The upside to *Last Rebellion*, is the combat, which addictively relies on guesswork and memory

on a combination of guesswork and memory. But the game's reliance on limited resource collection to refresh your party means that you are always going to get caught short sooner or later and have to replay huge chunks of the game over and over again as monsters, which appear outwardly avoidable but turn out to be fleet of foot than you, will chase you down until your death is an absolute certainty.

Dan Howdle

VERDICT

The battle system is interesting, but everything else about *Last Rebellion* is sub-par. If you've just finished *Final Fantasy XIII* and are looking for new pastures, don't even think about it.

42%



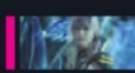
Sealers have to seal dead monsters or they just get up again. Point being?

Absorbed 36MP!



The battle system is clever, but also arduous and overly saturated.

Or you could try



Final Fantasy XIII Issue 190
Yes. Play this. It's much, much better and won't make you want to cry. 85%

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Half-Minute Hero

So time is linear, and NOT cyclical? Okay then



DETAILS

Publisher
Rising Star Games
Developer
Marvelous
Entertainment
Price
£19.99
Players
1-4
Genre
RPG
Supports
Ad-hoc Wi-Fi
Multiplayer, TV In/Out
Age Rating
12
Website
www.halfminutehero.com

There is a great evil in the land – one which only you, our young (quick) hero can destroy. And destroy it you must, for if it continues at this pace the very world will be annihilated. Along the way you will travel to villages and speak to their inhabitants, shop, upgrade weapons and armour, find secrets, grind the hell out of your character's level and eventually take on and take down the final boss in their superfortress. Oh, and you'll do it all in (roughly) 30 seconds. Forgot to mention that part.

The basic concept of the main element in *Half-Minute Hero* works as such: at the beginning of each episode you have 30 seconds on the clock. This runs down during time on the world map, as well as in fights. It pauses when in towns and can be reset to 30 seconds by visiting handily located shrines to the Time Goddess – for an ever-increasing fee, of course. Within this 30 seconds the player must defeat an entrenched enemy by levelling up and taking them down – and as the game progresses, this simple task becomes harder for a multitude of reasons. From areas with no enemies

A fantastic concept pulled off with style, humour and incredible charm

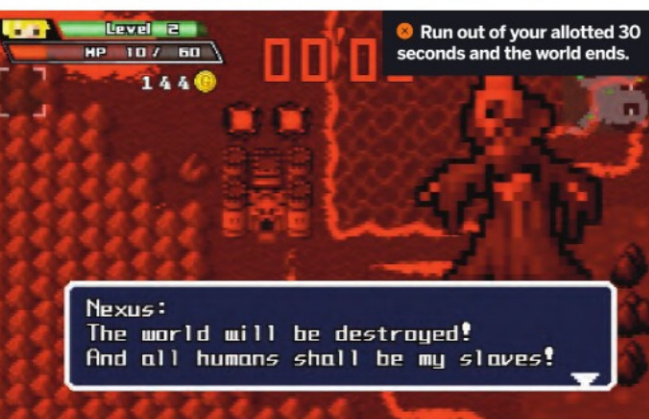
(meaning you can't level up) to castles blocked by turbulence from an unknown source, it's surprising how much the game makes you think in such a short space of time. Relationships are formed, NPCs join the party – it really is 30-plus complete RPGs in one tiny package.

Half-Minute Hero is a fantastic concept, pulled off with style, humour and incredible charm – and let's not forget it's a lot of fun, too. Aside from the collection of 30-second RPGs (with a branching patch, thus encouraging replays), the game is home to an RTS, a shmup and a defend-the-wizard mode. Oh, and co-operative multiplayer, too, though the co-operative aspect is skewed in favour of making everyone fend for themselves in a hilariously greedy fashion. Basically, for £20 and 30 seconds

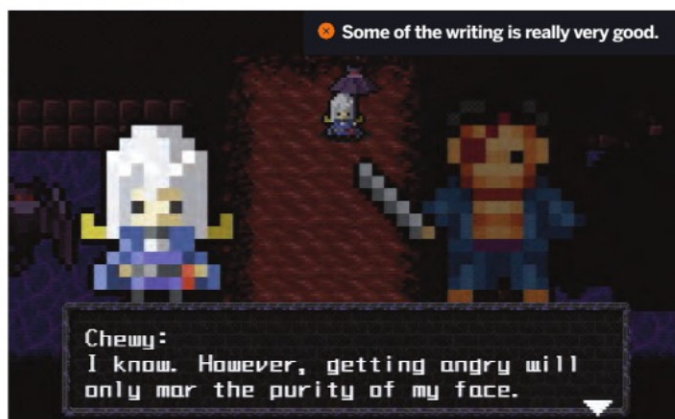
It doesn't look like it, but this is an RTS section (with amazing music).



An angry princess, surrounded by knights, wielding a crossbow. Yet it all makes sense.

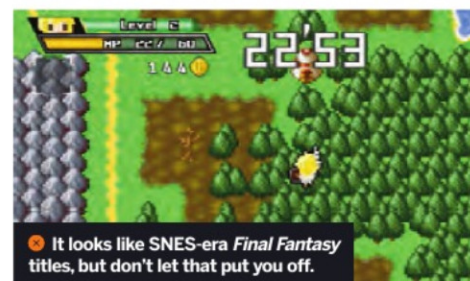


Nexus:
The world will be destroyed!
And all humans shall be my slaves!



Some of the writing is really very good.

Chewy:
I know. However, getting angry will only mar the purity of my face.



It looks like SNES-era *Final Fantasy* titles, but don't let that put you off.



Battles are handled automatically, and are over quickly.

per level (again, roughly), you get a huge amount of value for money and a huge amount of enjoyment to go along with it.

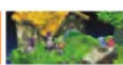
Even with the multiple game modes, though, *Half-Minute Hero* really won't last that long, and with the presentation the way it is it's only ever going to have niche appeal. But they're hardly complaints when a game is so utterly perfect for the PSP, and at a budget price it's almost unmissable.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Initially coming across as a novelty, *Half-Minute Hero* proves to be a fantastic package, covering multiple genres and raising more smiles than it has any right to. Heartily recommended.

87%





• The back story is told through Dante's chest tattoos, which come to life intermittently.



• The lower level of visual fidelity makes some of the gore look a bit comical at times.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Dante's Inferno

Going to Hell in a handheld

DETAILS

Publisher
EA
Developer
Visceral Games
Price
£29.99
Players
1
Genre
Action Adventure
Supports
TV In/Out
Age Rating
18
Website
www.dantesinferno.com

There's something both very right and very wrong about the way Visceral Games has approached the development of the PSP version of its epic, violent adaptation of Dante Alighieri's classic poem. It's very right that it's not a port, and has been developed alongside the PS3 version, rather than in its wake. For this reason, it's a technical triumph for the most part. Great looking, fast-paced and spectacular... for a PSP game. And that point brings us onto what's very wrong here – despite not being a port, it's still exactly the same game as the PS3 version only, y'know, less so.

While we were initially impressed by how closely this PSP version resembles its PS3 big daddy, it wasn't long before we were hit by the stark realisation that *Dante's Inferno*, much like the *God Of War* titles it so closely apes, relies very heavily on the top-drawer

production values afforded by the latest technology. Even when it is pushing the PSP impressively close to its absolute limit, *Dante's Inferno* still somehow feels very bare bones on five-year-old hardware.

The gameplay and level design are fundamentally the same, although the controls suffer from the usual problem of there not being enough buttons on the PSP to go around. The PSP setup still works, but it's not as intuitive as on the PS3 and does negatively impact the fluidity of the combat. Other than that, there have been a few omissions, but mostly of fiddly, puzzly sections and features that weren't very welcome anyway. For example, the puzzle mini-game you had to complete when absolving Condemned Souls has gone completely, so you can boost your Holy

powers without putting yourself through that again and again.

So essentially it's the same except... without the rich layers of audiovisual splendour lavished on its big brother, it really *isn't*. The combat system, for example, is solid enough. However, without the flashy visuals and slamming, full-bodied audio that was

Without the flashy PS3 visuals and slamming, full-bodied audio, it's nowhere near as satisfying

intended to go with it, it's nowhere near as satisfying and this makes a real difference. We knew that it was repetitive and generic on the PS3, but it didn't really matter because all the noise and effects and painstakingly detailed gore made it awesome anyway. It's still really good for a PSP game, but it just doesn't work very well as a PSP game. Only recommended to non-PS3 owners, and even then, with some reservations.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

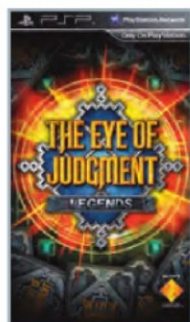
It's as close to the PS3 version as you could hope to get, but that's not necessarily a good thing. *Dante's Inferno* is designed with HD visuals and sound in mind, and the PSP isn't quite up to the job.

76%



• The Cross doesn't seem like a useful weapon at first, but it's worth levelling it up, as you'll need it later.





DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
Sony Japan Studio
Price
£24.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Strategy
Supports
Ad-hoc Wi-Fi
Multiplayer,
Infrastructure Wi-Fi
Multiplayer, TV In/Out
Age Rating
12
Website
www.eyeofjudgment.com



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Eye Of Judgment: Legends

Don't need... don't need... don't need... don't need...

Persuading someone who likes card trading games that they're designed to be *addictive* and not to be *good* in a conventional sense is like trying to persuade a user of hard drugs that the feeling of euphoria they're having is a really bad thing. So, if you're reading this because trading card games



are your thing, we don't expect you to pay a blind bit of notice when we point out that *The Eye Of Judgment* isn't a very good card game or a particularly good board game. Like all trading card games it's needlessly complicated at the expense of any genuine strategic dynamics, just for the sake of making every card feel like it's worth having.

That said, by trading card game standards, *The Eye Of Judgment* isn't that bad, or even that complicated. The nine-square board system is simple, works pretty well and does add *some* semblance of real strategy to proceedings. It's the many and varied properties of the cards that over-complicate matters. One turn can have a whole myriad of effects and we often found ourselves shrugging with the acceptance



that we would never know what just happened or why.

The main differences between this and the PS3 version are that there's no camera support or real cards, and you can earn and buy new cards in-game on the PSP. You can buy them with real money from the PS Store, though, but please, just don't.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

Not bad for a trading card game and the fact you *don't* have to pay real money to bolster your collection is some solace, but it's not very engaging unless you like obsessively hoarding worthless things.

57%



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
Sony Japan Studio
Price
£24.99
Players
1
Genre
Puzzle
Supports
TV In/Out
Age Rating
3
Website
<http://uk.playstation.com>

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

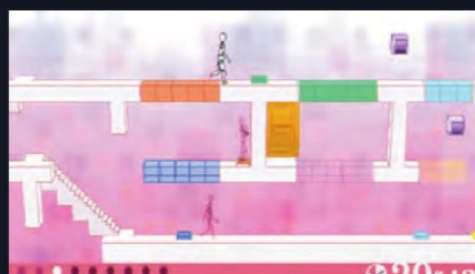
echoshift

Try again? And again? And again? And again? And...

There's no denying that *echoshift* is a distinctive and very cleverly designed puzzle game, but that doesn't mean it's loads of fun. It will certainly give your brain a lot of exercise and it can be immensely satisfying, but it can also be a frustrating chore, too.

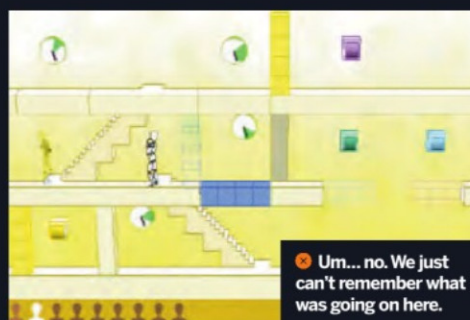
It can be immensely satisfying, but it can also be a frustrating chore, too

The problem is that one of the fundamental principles of *echoshift* is that you have to go

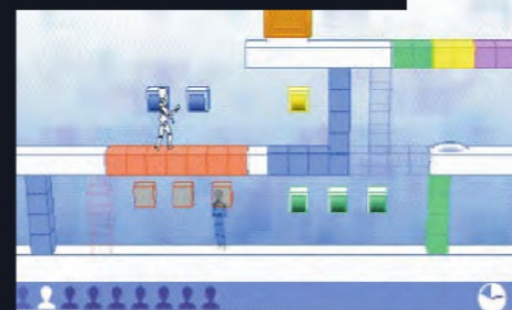


back and start again a lot, even if you do get it right first time, which you won't. You can't complete any of *echoshift's* levels in one attempt, the idea being that on each attempt you do something to facilitate the progress of your next attempt, such as dropping down a gap where there's a switch that creates a bridge

over the gap. It soon gets a lot more complicated than that, though, and before long you have to start timing your actions very carefully to sync three or more 'shifts' (as your attempts are known) together in order



✖ On our first shift we dropped down and pressed those three buttons so that we could use the bridge on our next one. See?



to traverse a whole series of obstacles. It gets incredibly complicated and when you get it right and earn a three-star rating it's immensely satisfying. But slight mistakes can screw up the whole thing and leave you with a choice of restarting for real, which is frustrating, or using additional shifts to clumsily plug up the holes in your plan, which is tedious and unsatisfying. A lot of hard work for very sporadic reward.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

If you want a truly mind-mangling challenge then *echoshift* should more than adequately meet your requirements, but it's a game that sees hard brainwork as its own reward, offering little in the way of fun besides.

73%

100% ESSENTIAL 0% FAIR PowerStation

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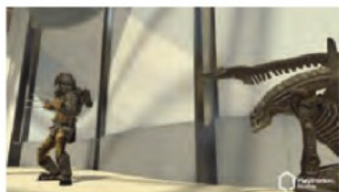
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PLAYSTATION Network News

プレーバック News and views from the PSN

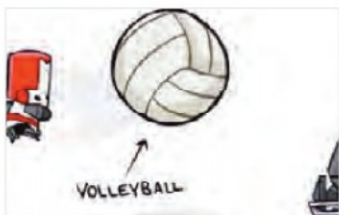
演劇 ター

YOU MAY HAVE MISSED...



Homecoming Threads

Hands up who likes Home costumes? None of you? We know a few of you must exist, so take a look at what's been added over the last few months. The likes of *Killzone* and *Uncharted* have had the avatar clothing treatment, perfect for those who like to play dress-up. Sadly, the promotional Alien and Predator costumes ceased to be available on 31 March.



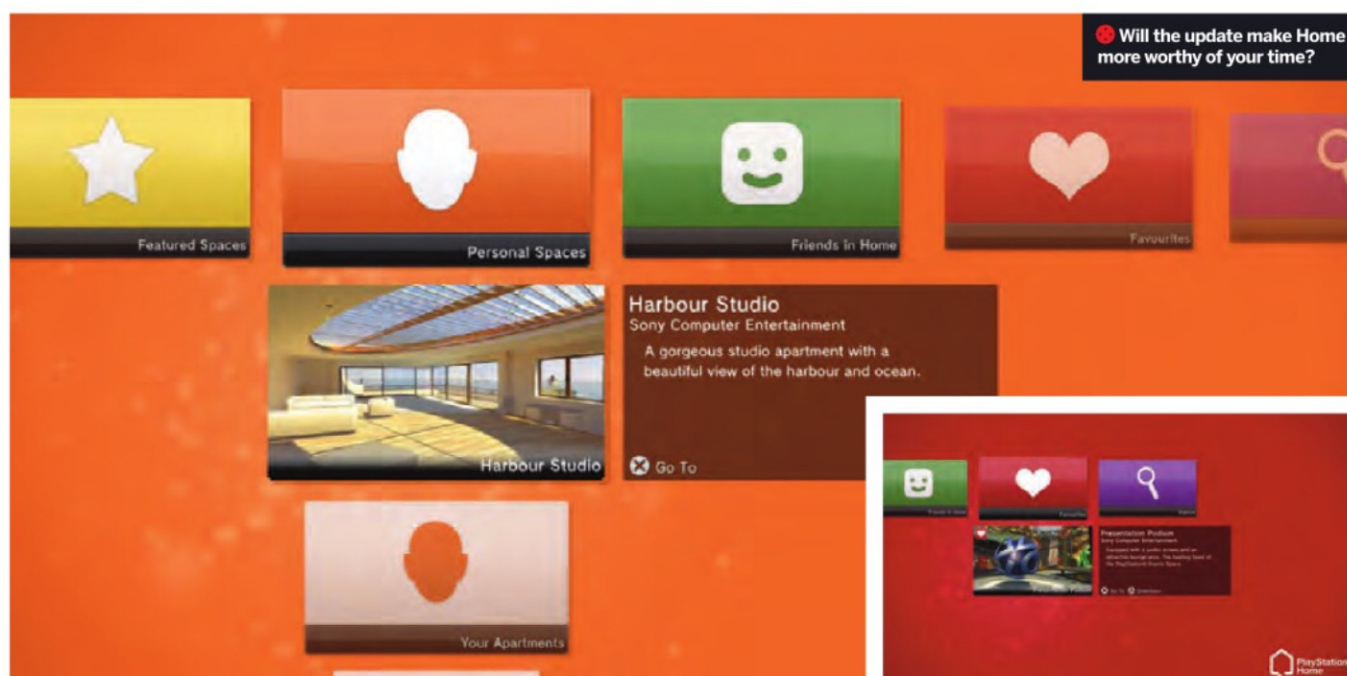
VolleyCrashers

The Behemoth, developer of *Castle Crashers*, has updated the world on the progress of its PSN port of the game. Posting on the PlayStation Blog, Emil Ayoubkhan – project manager at the dev – highlighted the volleyball mode added to the PSN version of the game. Yes, volleyball. Online multiplayer, AI opponents, numerous characters, leaderboards and magic attacks were all mentioned. No release date yet.



Monkey Magic

LucasArts has confirmed it is working on a remastered version of *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* for PSN. The classic Amiga/PC adventure game follows the example set by the release of the first *Monkey Island Special Edition* by re-drawing the graphics, adding a voice track and throwing in a dev's commentary. So actually it follows the example and ratchets things up a notch.



REFURBISHING HOME

New patch brings a faster, easier experience for all

PlayStation Home was recently updated to version 1.35, bringing with it more than a simple increase in number on the 'version' part of it. Rather than the usual bits and bobs of bug fixes and general stability hoo-ha that we've seen in Home patches of yore, this latest update brought with it an increase in both speed and accessibility, making it easier to navigate the service and to locate and muck about with your friends.

Before, it may have taken a while to explore, but now we have a simple menu system instead. Navigation has therefore been replaced by a couple of button presses and a lot less ambling around aimlessly.

It's something that needed to be done and it's nice to see Sony is indeed constantly improving and refining Home to make it appeal to as many people as possible. Whether a few updates and tweaks will be enough to encourage more PS3 owners

to use Home regularly we don't know, and we're also unsure if it's enough to bring back those who have lapsed from the service.

All the same, it's a good update and should make things a lot easier than they were before. Home is still growing as a service and is one we want to see succeed, but right now it still doesn't have enough to draw in the majority of users as Sony clearly wants it to. With time and more updates like this, however, things may well get better.



MAJOR LEAGUE

Sony signs the main studios for VDS

Sony Computer Entertainment America has announced a minor coup in the world of downloadable movies – all of the major movie studios are now on board and will offer HD content to users of the Video Delivery Service from their respective catalogues.

The studios in question – for those who aren't aware – consist of 20th Century Fox, Disney, Paramount, Sony Pictures, Universal and Warner Brothers. They have access to a hell of a lot of films, it's safe to say.

For now, the signing only has an impact on PSN users in the US, as they are getting it before us plebs in Europe. The studios on board mean the likes of *Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince*, *Up*, *District 9* and *Inglorious Basterds* will be available in Glorious HD™, something that has been sorely lacking with the movie service so far.

We contacted Sony Europe for confirmation of dates with regards to the service coming to the UK and Europe. Unfortunately, we weren't told anything concerning when, where, how or if the service is coming to these shores. Nevertheless, we will keep our eyes on the prize and report back if anything new comes to light.

A LOT MORE HEROES

Grasshopper may bring titles to PSN in future

Grasshopper Manufacture, creator of *Killer7* and the *No More Heroes* series, may be making its way to PlayStation Network if comments from the company's CEO Goichi Suda are anything to go by. Suda 51, as we like to call him when we want to feel all cool and 'in-touch', was speaking to *Develop* magazine in an interview published last month. When asked about the future of the company, Suda said:

"We're indie developers so we can really decide on which platform we make games for, though in terms of our relationships with our publisher, we sometimes have to meet their requests. That's a priority. But I'm very interested in creating downloadable content somehow. I'm interested in working on the PSN and XBLA platforms."

As far as we're concerned this is good news – Grasshopper's output is always a welcome break from the majority of dross we are fed. A digital distribution route could be a huge



● *No More Heroes: Paradise* should be out around now in Japan.

boon to the company as gamers who hadn't picked up its releases before in the shops would have direct access to all future releases. There's also the cost factor, with

PlayStation Network titles needing less capital to put out there in the first place, thus letting the company continue its 'Punk' output for years to come.



● Now that's a logo we should all love.



● Indie games *DeathSpank* (left) and *Shank* should be arriving on PSN some time in 2010.

SPANKSHANK

More indie titles make their way to PSN

EA Partners announced in March that it will be bringing both *DeathSpank* and *Shank* to PSN, which – from what we've seen – is very good news indeed. Both titles come from independent developers and weren't pencilled in for any definite platform before the EA deal came about.

DeathSpank is being made by Hothead Games – led by Ron Gilbert, the mastermind behind *The Secret Of Monkey Island* – and is a 'hilarious' RPG-style game where players take the role of the titular DeathSpank, "the Hero to the Downtrodden, a Vanquisher of Evil and Defender of Justice". Frankly, it sounds spectacular.

Shank, on the other hand, takes a more serious route. Developed by Klei Entertainment, the side-scrolling action game blends some magnificent graphic novel/comic-style visuals with what we're promised is a 'mature' storyline. The game was a finalist in this year's Independent Games Festival for Excellence in Visual Art, though it ended up losing out on the prize. Even though it didn't win, it's easy to see why it was shortlisted in the first place, and that tells you a lot about how bloody good it looks.

Both games are scheduled to arrive some time this year on PSN. We cannot wait.

POINT YOUR BROWSERS...



God Of METAL

The *God Of War* EP, known as *Blood & Metal*, has been released and can be sampled on the US PlayStation Blog right here: <http://bit.ly/9e4Qxw>. The post even includes a video of Trivium, but they're a bit annoying so you should probably ignore them and just listen to the rest of the EP. Killswitch Engage are "a bit better" according to Gav – so there you go.



Soundtrack News Part II

Following the soundtrack trend we seem to have set ourselves, why not jump on the web and Google 'Blast Off soundtrack'? For those struggling to figure out what good will come of this search: Halfbrick, developer of the PSN title *Blast Off*, has released the soundtrack to download for free. It's not life-changing, but it's a nice thing to have popping up every now and then on your MP3 player.



Getting Testy

The Tester, Sony's PSN-based reality TV show, should have finished by the time you read this. But seeing as the series wasn't available on the European PSN we've had to do with dodgy streams and written updates to get our fix. Actually, that's a lie. We didn't care about the show, even if it was a reasonably interesting idea. Check it out at thetester.com.

PSN RETRO REVIVAL

There's a lot to get your teeth into on the PlayStation Network, so we thought we'd make it a bit easier for you with some of our retro and arcade recommendations, as well as a few remakes and our hopes for the future

RETRO AND ARCADE OFFERINGS



GRAVITY CRASH

Score: 85% Price: £6.29

Not strictly a retro title, but *Gravity Crash* is so delightfully influenced by the likes of *Defender* and *Asteroids* that it's hard to ignore. While *PixelJunk Shooter* overshadowed it on release, Just Add Water's effort has held our attention for longer.



GTI CLUB+

Score: 72% Price: £7.99

A straight-up port of an arcade game that – frankly – we never expected to see. We didn't even have an inkling. It's a great little racing game and while eight quid is a bit pricey for one track, there's a lot of fun to be had racing and passing the bomb online.



WORMS

Score: 91% Price: £7.99

It took long enough to arrive on PS3, but the release of *Worms* brought much joy to the **Play** team. Simply because it's *Worms*, and poking your mates off the top of a cliff to their watery grave will never, ever get old. Online play takes it to a whole new level.



1UP
220

HIGH SCORE
1000

2UP
290



SUPER STREET FIGHTER 2 TURBO HD REMIX

Score: 72% Price: £11.99

Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix suffered a bit on release – it was very late coming to the EU PSN and happened to be released around the same time as *Street Fighter IV*. All the same, it's still a fantastic update to a legendary game, and well worth a place on anyone's hard drive.



GUNSTAR HEROES

Score: 85% Price: £3.99

A Mega Drive classic and one of the many reasons that Treasure is held in such high regard when it comes to developers. The classic shoot-'em-up *Gunstar Heroes* is still an excellent game, and the addition of online co-op is an absolute masterstroke.



MEGA MAN 9

Score: 75% Price: £6.99

Yes, we know this is a modern game. But the amount of effort put into making *Mega Man 9* an intentional anachronism can't go unrewarded. Just as with previous *Mega Mans*, it's tough – thus lending even more credibility to its faux-retro stylings.



BIONIC COMMANDO: REARMED

Score: 88% Price: £7.99

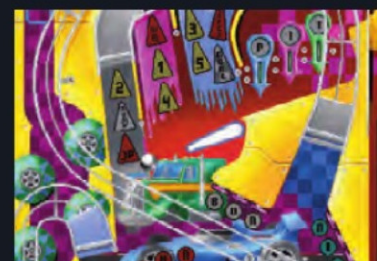
Capcom released *Rearmed* in the run-up to the launch of *Bionic Commando*, the PS3 re-imagining of the original game. It turned out that the remake of the original was far better than the re-imagined version.



WOLFENSTEIN 3D

Score: 70% Price: £3.99

It's not that *Wolfenstein* is bad, it's just that we'd rather recommend *Doom*. Unfortunately, this isn't available on PSN, so we have to stick with id's pre-Hell effort. It's not the first FPS ever made, but it is the one that put them on the map – and it's still fun.



PINBALL FANTASIES

Score: 90% Price: £3.99

Pinball Fantasies is quite possibly the best pinball game ever made. A port of the Amiga classic, originally created by DICE pre-*Battlefield* in 1992, there is so much character, fun and addictiveness spilling out of this one it's almost daft.



MORTAL KOMBAT 2

Score: N/A Price: £3.49

Released early in PSN's lifetime and pretty much forgotten or overlooked by all, this is the classic arcade alternative to *SFII*. It's not as violent as you may remember and has definitely aged worse than Capcom's effort. Still, it's cheap and has online play.

THE NON-EU CONTRIBUTION

THE SELECTION FROM elsewhere in the world isn't that different to the EU Store, to be honest. Still, there are a few:



BONK 3: BONK'S BIG ADVENTURE

Available: Japan

Bonk's name never made us laugh. Well, that's a lie. Still, he was called *BC Kid* over here, so that's less funny. A classic PC-Engine arcade platformer where the titular hero runs around head-butting things.



NAMCO MUSEUM ESSENTIALS

Available: America

European users with US accounts can download this collection of classic Namco titles. *Dig Dug*, *Galaga*, *Pac-Man* and *Xevious* – along with *Xevious Resurrection* – are the classics on offer.



CATAN

Available: Japan

A port of the Xbox Live release of this 'classic' board game still – for some reason – hasn't made its way out of Japan. It's not the most essential purchase in the world, but it is at least a novelty.



PSONE CLASSICS

IF YOU ARRIVED at the PS3 without experiencing the original PlayStation then fear not – there is a wealth of content available on PSN. Here's ten of the best (that's not the ten best. Also there's 11)



BISHI BASHI SPECIAL

Score: 61% Price: £3.49

We mention it every chance we get, with good reason: *Bishi Bashi Special* is incredible fun. For £3.49 you can't do much wrong, and with games like Uncle Launcher and Hyper Pie Throw how can you even pretend to resist? It's classic mini-game heaven.



CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED

Score: 82% Price: £3.99

The last of the traditional *Crash* games by Naughty Dog is also the best – arguably. Great platform action with the idiot bandicoot makes this ideal for those looking for a nostalgic trip, as well as those with young 'uns.



FUTURE COP: LAPD

Score: 94% (pre-PSN) Price: £3.99

A criminally overlooked gem that received an unexpected PSN release, *Future Cop* is the unofficial sixth part to EA's *Strike* series. While visually it hasn't held up too well it more than makes up for it with quick-paced, action-packed, shooty-gaming joy.



G-POLICE

Score: 84% (pre-PSN) Price: £3.49

One of the first PSone games to come on two discs. The CG doesn't look great, graphically it stutters and the controls can be a nightmare, but from an atmospheric and setting standpoint it is only outdone on PSN by *Syndicate Wars*.



VAGRANT STORY

Score: 82% Price: £4.79

A classic Squaresoft action-RPG that was seemingly lost in the build-up to PS2's release, happily made available for a good price on PSN. Rose-tinted specs may have made us remember it as better than it is, but that doesn't mean it's not worth picking up. A genuine cult classic.



FINAL FANTASY VII/VIII

Score: 96%/90% Price: £7.99 each

It should come as no surprise that both of these titles come highly recommended. Whether you choose one or the other – or both – is a matter of personal preference, with many preferring Cloud's battle against Sephiroth to Squall's... wait, what happened in *VIII* again?



INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD

Score: 80% Price: £3.49

The old wrist-breaker. *Track & Field* has yet to be bettered in the athletics genre, and Konami's 1996 effort is still just as good as the day it was released. If you download it, prepare for some stiff joints – it *will* hurt you.



KULA WORLD

Score: 71% Price: £3.99

A game where you control a beach ball while traversing maze-like levels in three dimensions. Yes, you read that right. As it was never a game reliant on its looks, it holds up well – simplicity is key. It can be mind-bending and infuriatingly hard, so we love it.



METAL GEAR SOLID

Score: 93% Price: £7.99

Snake's first PlayStation adventure is still one of the best – those who have played until 'that part' of *MGS 4* will have experienced some of this, as will many others who played it before. The rest of you have no excuse: it's one of the world's best sneak-'em-ups.



SYNDICATE WARS

Score: 85% (pre-PSN) Price: £3.99

Inferior to the PC version and with a control scheme that would probably put most off recommending it, but this is still one of the most atmospheric games ever, and blowing buildings up in a cyberpunk setting with nuclear grenades never gets old.

COMING SOON

WHAT DOES THE future of retro/remakes have in store for PSN? Well this lot have either been confirmed or – at the very least – heavily rumoured. We can't wait



AFTER BURNER CLIMAX

Officially the fourth game in the series, *Climax* has been in arcades since 2006. Thankfully it'll be coming to PSN soon.



ALIEN BREED EVOLUTION

Already released on Xbox Live, we're waiting excitedly for this one. *Alien Breed* was a classic on Amiga, after all.



BOMBERMAN ULTRA: BATTLEFEST

You can never have too much *Bomberman*, so we're really looking forward to this latest chapter coming soon to PSN.



CALIFORNIA GAMES

Apparently a remake of this Mega Drive classic is on its way to PlayStation Network – skate, surf and Frisbee joy in HD? Okay then.



EARTHWORM JIM HD

We know very little about this version of the classic platformer. Still: it's an *Earthworm Jim* game, so it'll be great.



FINAL FIGHT: DOUBLE IMPACT

The side-scrolling brawler will come with *Magic Sword* and some great presentation options. We can't wait.



MEGA MAN 10

It's good to see Capcom continuing to re-create new, old, classic *Mega Man* games. And making us write confusing sentences.



ROCKET KNIGHT

Sparkster, the... thing... makes his triumphant return in *Rocket Knight*, a revival of the classic platformer series. One to look out for.



SONIC 4

We can't think of anyone who was genuinely surprised when Project Needlemouse was revealed to be *Sonic 4*. Episodic downloads a go-go.



TOKI

It may not be known particularly well, but we had *Toki* on the Amiga and it was great. Monkeys spewing fireballs = top-notch.

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

IT'S ALL WELL and good telling you what you should get and what's on the horizon, but what about ten games we think should come to the European PSN? Oh, go on then:



THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

Another that's on Xbox Live that we don't have yet. PSN needs Guybrush and his adventuring, piratey ways.



COLONY WARS 2: VENGEANCE

The first one was dull and the third one poor. Number two is the only viable option for PSone space combat.



FINAL FANTASY IX

It's the highest-ranked *FF* title on Metacritic, yet there's been no mention of a PlayStation Network release. This needs rectifying.



PARAPPA THE RAPPER/UM JAMMER LAMMY

The former was re-released on PSP, the latter is out on the US Store. What's stopping them from coming out here?



RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

The best *Ridge Racer* game on PSone, harking back to a time when there was more experimentation with the series. A true classic.



SPELUNKY

A rogue-like (ie difficult) platformer currently making the PC crowd wet themselves with glee. It's coming to Xbox Live: why not PSN?



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

This is merely to test the theory that a ten-year-old game is better than its 2009 edition (it is).



TWISTED METAL 2

The US Store has had this for years now. Why haven't we got it? Best car combat game ever (apart from *Twisted Metal: Black*).



SUIKODEN II

Releasing this classic PSone RPG on PlayStation Network would mean we could actually pick it up at a non-eBay, reasonable price.



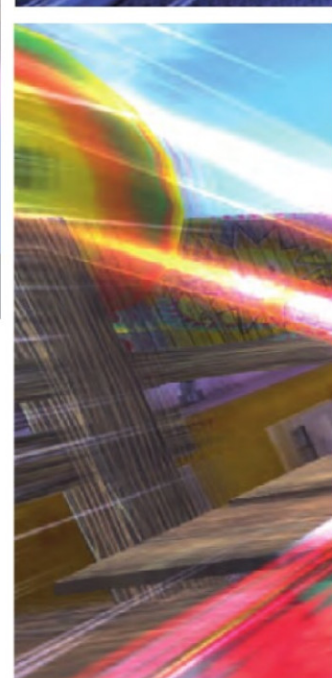
CHRONO CROSS

A legendary PSone RPG living in the shadow of *FFVII*. It just needs to come to PSN.

SPECIAL ROGUE ENTRY: PLAYSTATION 2 AND DREAMCAST GAMES

Both of these have been heavily rumoured for months now, and we want to see it come to fruition. The downloads would be bigger and the games would be more expensive, but it would be incredible to get hold of some classics from the 128-bit era.





Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing

The PS3's only kart racer continues its reign on top

Regardless what your thoughts on *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing* are, you can't really cement such opinions until you've played it in a multiplayer setting. The kart genre has always thrived within it and, arguably, it is here where it lives or dies – just ask the millions of people who continue to play *Mario Kart* to this day. So, with Sega's favourite poster boy, Sonic, finally throwing his weight into the ring, not counting the Japan-only *Sonic Drift*, the real question is whether or not he has the legs needed to ensure maximum longevity.

Straight away it's clear that what Sumo Digital has created is fun. The courses based on classic Sega games, the cast of characters that resonate instantly and the game-specific power-ups all come together successfully and work... in the short-term. *Sonic & Sega's* biggest problem, both offline and on, is how it struggles over long periods of play. It's a huge

shame as races can be exceptionally exciting. Fighting it out with another competitor as you each jockey for position before gaining the lead thanks to a well-placed rocket attack is insanely satisfying. The same can be said for entire grids as well. Find a group of racers who are around the same skill level and tension can ride high. Unfortunately, as mentioned, this isn't the norm. *All-Stars Racing*, more often than not, becomes a game aimed at trying to break away from the pack and hope you never get hit by a weapon. If you fail at this, and due to the game's nature 99 per cent of the time you will, be prepared to settle for the position you find yourself in. It's oddly difficult to try to catch up with the front runners even with the selection of items you'll often find at your disposal. Ultimately they're pointless as they hardly aid your race, serving

to merely offer the chance of stopping anyone behind you from taking your precious fifth spot. Yes, there is an option to turn 'Catch Up' on and off, but even when activated it doesn't make a huge difference.

From a technical standpoint, at least, *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing* does manage to

Sonic & Sega Racing's biggest problem, both offline and on, is how it struggles over long periods of play

hold its own. Aside from the returning dodgy frame rate, which is still difficult to stomach, lag doesn't seem to be a factor at all. Not one of our contests was ruined by internet-related problems, a positive that's becoming more common over the PlayStation Network. Throw in that you don't have to wait for a lobby to fill up – computer-controlled



"You won't need to overlook too many problems in order to get your karting fix" 78%



DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
Sumo Digital
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£49.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Racing
Supports
720p, Sixaxis,
DualShock 3, Dolby
Digital 5.1

online reviews

ミナル

それはどのようによかったか。



Although the standard race is fine, Sumo could have opened up the online mode far more than it has done.



Above all else, the most aggravating part of Sonic Racing is getting stuck at the back of the pack with no chance of catching up.

opponents can be used to reduce the wait – and it's a streamlined experience.

Again, though, those who persevere or just find it entertaining to exist within a very Sega-orientated universe will, intermittently, find themselves feeling entertained. It's doubtful this joy will last for more than a few hours but anyone who simply must play may be slightly contented. It's just a pity it doesn't get inside your head and keep on giving like the kart game that continues to rule the roost.

Simon Miller

VERDICT

Fun in short bursts, a bit dull over long, *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing* manages to sustain its entertaining ways due to a surprisingly strong community and the spontaneous nature of its races. It should only be returned to sporadically but this isn't half bad.

★★★★★

TO BE THIS GOOD

It takes Sega Miles

CLEARLY, SONIC & SEGA *All-Stars Racing* exists to serve the Sega fanboys of the world on every level. To entice this fraternity to explore every nook and cranny, the in-game store houses more characters, tracks and songs that can be unlocked using the currency known as Sega Miles. Given the magnitude of the shop and limited appeal of single-player, points can be earned online, adding an extra incentive to try to win every race. It's a well-thought-out integration between offline and online modes and one that does a decent job in adding an extra layer of longevity.

PSN Roundup

SUPERSTARS V8: NEXT CHALLENGE

A challenge it is indeed

Publisher: Black Bean Developer: Milestone Price: £49.99 Players: 1-16 Genre: Racing

It's difficult not to be charmed by *Superstars V8: Next Challenge*. Despite games like *Gran Turismo* and some game called *Forza Motorsport* dominating the market for the PlayStation 3 and Microsoft's console, it does its utmost to challenge them in every area.

Unfortunately, it was never going to be able to truly compete and the same shortcomings are true when it comes to life over on the PlayStation Network. Black Bean has done all it can to include as many game modes as possible, even incorporating a well-put-together championship option allowing players to compete over an entire season. However, despite all its best efforts it's the fundamental foundations that prevent *Superstars V8: Next Challenge* from being an underdog success story. With clunky controls and difficult vehicles,



the only reason to indulge in a spot of online play is if you have an affinity with the core mechanics. We imagine this audience will only be a select few. SM

★★★★★

WHITE KNIGHT CHRONICLES

The reason to get involved

Publisher: Sony Developer: Level-5 Price: £49.99 Players: 1-4 Genre: RPG

Even the most hardened Level-5 fan would struggle to sing *White Knight Chronicles'* praises. Never reaching the highs of its plentiful predecessors it is, on occasion, really rather boring. Online is slightly different.

First off, the Japanese developer has reintroduced the fabulous Georama system, allowing you to build your own towns that have the ability to serve as a lobby; anyone who found an affiliation with *Dark Chronicle* will find this as addictive as ever. There's just something very fulfilling about constructing miniature cities. Alas, participating in the actual sub quests, led by the silent avatar you created at the start of the *White Knight* experience, with three friends, isn't too far removed from the single-player. None of the missions are very exciting and the controversial battle system



soon wears you down. Having to continually wait for the gauge to fill back up to activate even the simplest move leads to real aggravation. The potential is there but it's never realised. SM

★★★★★

BLAZBLUE: CALAMITY TRIGGER

Now kicking it, UK style!

Publisher Zen United Developer Arc System Works Price £49.99 Players 1-2 Genre Beat-'em-up

Ah, our old friend *BlazBlue*. Striking fear into the hearts of many ill-informed gamers, and despite rumours to the contrary, System Arc's fighter is perfectly accessible to those who are willing to put in the time. The satisfaction from getting the basics down is the drive needed to surge forward and there comes a point where taking the fight over the PSN just seems logical. Unfortunately, it's here where the true challenge awaits. As addictive as this has the potential to be, the online battleground is fierce, packed with players who have clearly studied the mechanics as if it was on a university syllabus. Be prepared for some severe frustration if the lure of multiplayer competition becomes too great. Throw in the occasional online button lag that



does require the odd adjustment from time to time and you have a solid online beat-'em-up. With that said, it fails to topple the mighty *Street Fighter IV*. SM

★★★★★



DETAILS

Publisher
2K Games
Developer
Gearbox
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£6.29
Players
1-4
Genre
RPG

Borderlands: The Secret Armory Of General Knoxx DLC

Careful, this piece of DLC goes all the way to 11

When it comes to delivering genuinely decent downloadable content, one developer stands apart from all the rest. That developer is Gearbox and while its last piece of DLC didn't quite hit the high standards of *The Zombie Island Of Dr Ned*, its latest effort is a different matter entirely.

The Secret Armory Of General Knoxx is a truly staggering piece of DLC that makes efforts from other developers look like the cheap and nasty cynical cash-ins they so obviously are. Listening to player feedback and unafraid to give you genuine value for money, *Borderlands'* latest piece of DLC greatly expands upon the original game. For just over £6 you get a further 40 genuinely decent missions to tackle, three new vehicles, loads of new enemies, a new set of rare weapons and plenty of new locations. It's a huge new area for your characters to explore, so it's somewhat pleasing to

learn that Gearbox has upped the already impressive level cap to 61.

A word of warning, however – the starting level for quests in SAGK is level 35, so don't even attempt to start the piece of DLC if you haven't completed the main game. We'd also advise you to use your first playthrough, as this is one tough son of a bitch. Straight from the off you're attacked by amazingly athletic ninjas that can flip past your bullets with ease and diminish your health bar in an instant. These crazed adversaries constantly attack you through the new piece of DLC and unlike the original *Borderlands* you really do feel as if the world of Pandora now actively revolves around you and your desperate exploits.

Part of this is due to how well SAGK carries on from the events at the end of *Borderlands*. Entering an uneasy alliance

with Athena you're trying to stop General Knoxx and the Atlas Corporation from taking over Pandora, and what do you know? You are now public enemy number one due to your exploits at the end of the main game.

While the main quest can be completed in just under six hours, there are still plenty

Straight from the off you're attacked by amazingly athletic ninjas that can flip past your bullets with ease

of side quests and loot hunts to ensure that you'll be constantly revisiting Pandora. It's a testament to Gearbox's skill that you're continually impressed by the new locations and enemies you meet, and it's a real pity that other developers don't put as much care and thought into their own DLC.

For all its brilliance, SAGK does suffer from a few little annoyances, although they

Store Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

Store Roundup



Lengthy stretches of road are the only thing that let this otherwise superb piece of DLC down.



There are more than a few familiar faces for those who've already completed Borderlands.

FIFA 10: ULTIMATE TEAM DLC

Like football, it's a game of two halves
Publisher Electronic Arts **Developer** In-House
Release Date Out Now **Price** £3.99 **Players** 1-4 **Genre** Puzzle/Sports

WHILE EA'S LATEST piece of DLC will be familiar to those with the previous release, it is still a genuine improvement on last year's effort.

The team chemistry and trading is far better, but many things still grate. The loss of your album takes away from *Ultimate Team's* collecting theme, having training bonuses last for only one game means you have to buy cards more frequently and navigating menus is a real pain. The high prices for premium packs also annoy, meaning that while there are undeniable improvements to *Ultimate Team* perhaps EA should look into its pricing structure for future DLC in order to attract more people.

★★★★★



SWITCHBALL GAME

Marble Madness for a new generation
Publisher SOE **Developer** Atomic Elbow
Release Date Out Now **Price** £6.29 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Puzzle

SWITCHBALL HAS TAKEN its time to arrive on PSN – it was released on Live Arcade in 2007 – but it has certainly been worth the wait.

Taking control of a marble, you're simply required to negotiate an obstacle course as quickly as possible. It's an incredibly simple concept that's greatly enhanced thanks to extremely clever level design, some very crafty puzzles and the ability to switch between numerous different balls.

Blessed with slick visuals and exceptionally polished physics, *Switchball* is let down by empty multiplayer lobbies and ridiculously lengthy loading times. Not perfect then, but well worth a download.

75%



UNCHARTED 2 DLC

Drake gets a multiplayer makeover
Publisher SCEE **Developer** Naughty Dog
Release Date Out Now **Price** £3.99 **Players** 1-4 **Genre** Adventure

WHILE OTHER DEVELOPERS give you extra levels that should have been included in the first place, Naughty Dog has decided to improve on *Uncharted 2's* already impressive multiplayer.

12 new multiplayer Trophies boost the meagre selection from the original game, while six new skins including Eddy Raja and Elena have also been included. Best of all are two new maps taken from sections of *Drake's Fortune*. The Flooded Ruins is a tight, well-constructed level, while The Facility features plenty of handy nooks and crannies to hide in. A solid package at a great price.

★★★★★



REVENGE OF THE WOUNDED DRAGONS GAME

Fighting like its 1989
Publisher SOE **Developer** Artificial Mind and Movement **Release Date** Out Now **Price** £6.29 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Fighter

SCROLLING FIGHTERS ARE something of a rarity on PSN, and it's even rarer for them to match the arcade fighters of old. *Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons* is the latest offering to hit the store and while it looks rather pretty, it's something of a bland brawler.

It's certainly a large game with plenty of stages to wade through, but the combat itself is very basic with a limited amount of moves that aren't helped by rather stodgy controls. The addition of a second player certainly adds to the enjoyment, but this is far from an essential download.

60%



rarely distract too much from the overall experience. Initially you'll be doing a lot of boring driving through bland stretches of wasteland. This has obviously been done to allow you to fully test-drive the three new vehicles that have been included, but it still irks. Difficulty spikes can also rear their ugly head, although it happens very rarely, with only a specific 61-level quest proving annoying. Despite this *The Secret Armory Of General Knox* is still the best piece of DLC we've played all year.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

Fans of *Borderlands* are being well catered for here. You get a huge amount of genuinely decent content for your money and many hours of play. Easily the best piece of DLC we've seen this year.

★★★★★

WHEELY GREAT

The new vehicles of Borderlands

ALTHOUGH GEARBOX HAS only included three new vehicles in *The Secret Armory Of General Knox*, they all handle completely differently to each other.

The Racer is a blisteringly fast vehicle that makes short work of the huge stretches of road you have to traverse. It's incredibly difficult to control, however, and blows up all too easily.

The Monster, on the other hand, is a more middle-of-the-road vehicle that lacks speed but does include an incredibly dangerous homing missile that can make short work of your enemies. Last but by no means least is the Lancer, which is an absolute beast of a machine that can take huge amounts of punishment but also carries a devastating amount of weaponry.

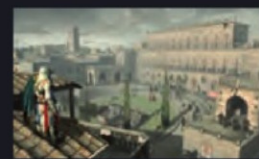
ASSASSIN'S CREED II: BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES DLC

Ezio's latest piece of DLC is to die for
Publisher Ubisoft **Developer** Ubisoft Montreal **Release Date** Out Now **Price** £3.19/£5.49 **Players** 1 **Genre** Platformer

AFTER THE disappointment of *The Battle Of Forlì*, Ubisoft makes amends with a piece of DLC that is far more substantial – consisting of nine assassinations, a new section of Florence to explore and a handy new spring jump.

The strength of *Bonfire Of The Vanities* is that all the assassinations are highly challenging. It's a strong package that offers even more for your money if you pick up the slightly more expensive pack that contains four additional Templar lairs to explore.

★★★★★



GREED CORP GAME

An RTS like no other
Publisher W!Games **Developer** In-House **Release Date** Out Now **Price** £7.99 **Players** 1-4 **Genre** RTS

LOOK BENEATH *Greed Corp's* cutesy hexagonal-based visuals and you'll find a surprisingly deep and rewarding strategy game. While it initially appears to be like any other resource management game, you soon realise that your harvesters continually damage the area around them, meaning you only have a finite amount of turns before you lose them and the resources around them. It's an intriguing concept that allows for a surprising amount of depth that's rarely seen in PSN titles. It takes a while to grasp but *Greed Corp* is a solid strategy game, both online and off.

75%



Including: Ten Of The Best... True Crimes (in games) /// The Play Quiz /// Cult Heroes

Ten of the best...

...True Crimes (in games)

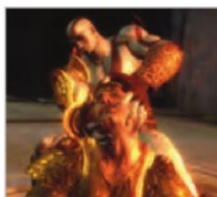
We often just think of what we do in videogames as accomplishments; as necessary for progression. But in the real world, these things would be very true crimes



Carjacking

True Crime: Streets Of LA

It certainly wasn't the game to invent the notion of carjacking in a virtual environment. Nevertheless, the first *True Crime* game always gave us a perverse sense of pleasure when stealing from civvies, if only because you played as a cop. A good old-fashioned abuse of power.



Murder

Far too many games to mention

When did it get to the point where a game *has* to involve killing for it not to be considered 'casual'? It seems that the only way 90 per cent of titles can make us understand that we're making progress or being rewarded is by getting us to slaughter hundreds of people.



Kidnap

Grand Theft Auto series

The specific example we're thinking of is actually carjacking, kidnap and murder – but we'll concentrate on the middle aspect for now. In *GTA* it was possible to jack a car with the passenger still inside, before driving around with them screaming their heads off. Ah, hilarious kidnap.



Espionage

Metal Gear Solid series

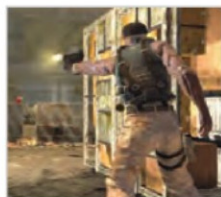
It may be 'fun', 'cool' and 'a great time' to commit espionage as Solid/Naked Snake in *MGS*, but it's certainly no laughing matter in the real world. In peace time you could be looking at spending a long time in prison, and in times of war you could very easily be put in front of a firing squad.



Animal cruelty

Tomb Raider series

It is a rather obvious one and is brought up on a fairly regular basis, but that doesn't make it any less of a crime. It has been illegal to treat animals cruelly ever since 1911, but this never stopped Lara Croft from shooting gorillas. Or tigers. Or monkeys. Or even a ruddy *Tyrannosaurus Rex*.



Anti-social behaviour

Sure, Fiddy kills a lot of people, trespasses and generally causes mayhem, but the thing that really gets our goat is how deserving of an ASBO he is during *Blood On The Sand*. Everywhere he goes it's 'eff this' and 'eff that' – you wouldn't get away with that kind of thing in Britain, that much we know.



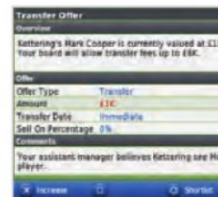
Dangerous driving

There's disobeying the laws of the road and generally being a twat in lots of other games, but nothing else manages to come close to the sheer disregard for all safety shown by Rico in *Just Cause 2*. When you introduce a parachute to your driving crimes, you know you've taken things to a whole new level.



Pervverting the course of justice

Madison Paige's constant efforts to help out Ethan Mars (depending on how you play the game, of course) would likely net her considerable jail time, and Ethan would easily be facing many years behind bars as well. As for Shelby in the antiques shop? That has to carry at least a few months in prison.



Embezzlement

Football Manager series

You may think it's just harmless cheating to take over as manager of a second club and funnel funds from said club to your main team, but the judge wouldn't see it that way. No, you would be done for the embezzlement of millions and placed in a lonely cell for many years. You sicken us.



Genocide

Call Of Duty: World At War

At least we can say that not so many games encourage wanton genocide, unlike murder. One notable exception is *World At War*, where your actions directly precipitate the dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Happy now, are you? You've killed hundreds of thousands of innocent people.

GAME unDeR Stock photography, fictitious stories, real lives...

One day, at the **Play** office...

We've run out of milk!

How will we ever have our tea and coffee now?!

The team searched high and low for milk sources

Umm... they're horses. I am not milking a horse.

But! But! Oh, okay then.

You know 'milking' a snake is for venom, yes?

Well I do NOW.

This milk has been used to store goldfish. I will not use it in my tea/coffee.

Pansy.

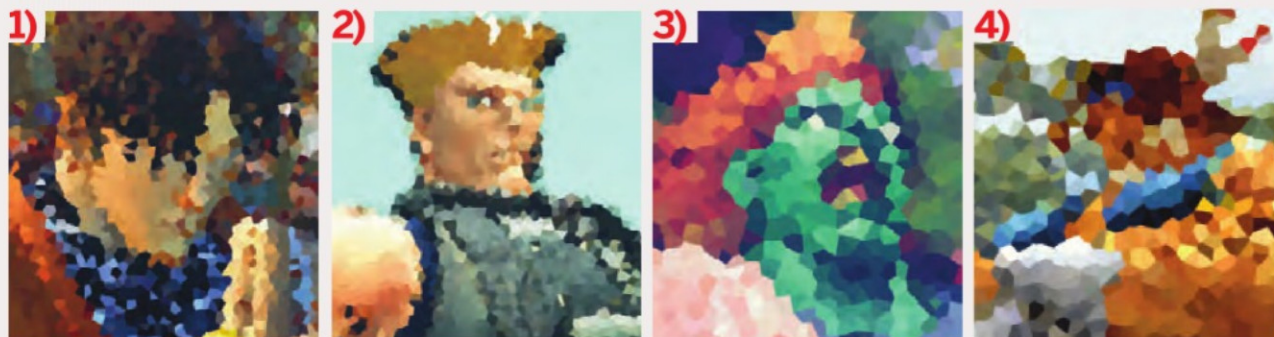
What the hell has this got to do with milk?

No idea. Tigers are fighting, though.

It's the PlayStation quiz so hard that even the **Play** team can't do it, and they made it in the first place. Good luck, you'll need it...

Let's get quizzical!

Super Street Fighter II – that's a game. So name these characters from it, NOW:



Red Dead Redemption has cowboys in it. So let's have some cowboy film/TV-related questions:

5) The lead character of the *Dollars Trilogy*, played by Clint Eastwood, is called what?

6) Rooster Cogburn was played by which Hollywood icon?



7) Ian McShane plays who in (the excellent) *Deadwood*?

8) What is strange about Yul Brynner's character in *Westworld*?

9) How many Oscars did *Unforgiven* win?

10) We like the brilliant *Deadwood* more than most things, so here's another question about it: where is it set?

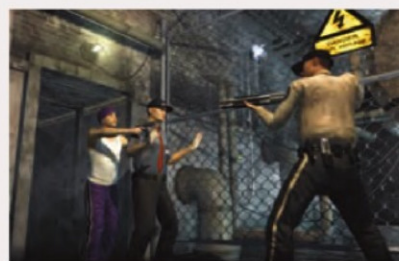
True Crime was originally a GTA clone, so let's ask some questions related to GTA and its clones:

11) Which game is set in London taaaahn?

12) What do you spray over housing estates during *Saints Row 2*?

13) What was the name of Niko Bellic's cousin?

14) Where did *True Crime* move to after LA?



15) Which series was excellent on the PSone before being awful on its PS2 debut, the third in the series?

People tend to overlook the PSP, while we still love it dearly. So let's ask some questions about the little blighter:

16) What year was the handheld released in the UK/Europe?

17) How many revisions of the hardware have there been?

18) What is the really annoying thing that you have to upgrade seemingly every time you put a new game in the console?

19) What is the proprietary format the PSPgo does not support?

20) How many PSP consoles has Ian been through?



So how did you do in our world-famous **Play** quiz? To those of you who cheated, we've been watching you, and we're not impressed.

Answers on page 99

CULT HEROES

A look back at a bygone age when men were men and games were art. Possibly



Sniper Elite

Absolutely nothing like *Rogue Warrior*

Format: **PS2** Released: **September 2005** Reviewed: **134** Score: **88%**

IT'S HARD TO believe that just five years ago Rebellion was a critical darling; a developer who could do no wrong and released (cult) classic after (cult) classic. What went wrong, we do not know, but the company that made *Rogue Warrior* is not the Rebellion we remember and love. That honour falls to the previous version of the company: the one that developed *Sniper Elite*.

Set at the tail end of the Second World War, *Sniper Elite* placed players neatly in the shoes of a US operative working in Berlin, tasked with keeping the ever-advancing Red Army from obtaining the Nazi's nuclear secrets. His employers, you see, think the Yanks would be better off getting them – being American as they are.

It's actually quite an interesting setup for a WWII game, but the *really* interesting part comes with the game itself. Rather than the usual 'one-man army versus everyone who isn't a Western capitalist', the game takes a subtler route. Charging in all guns blazing will actually get you nowhere, and players are instead expected to be more methodical, casual and generally slower with their approach to each level. A target has to be found, stalked and thoroughly researched before you can take a shot, and when you're about to pull the trigger a whole host of other elements have to be considered: wind strength; the arc of the bullet's trajectory; your character's breathing – all of these elements play a massive part in simply shooting a man in the face.

It might sound like a bit too much but it never is. In the face of an onslaught of World War II games, *Sniper Elite* stood alone, proud of its detail, the level of respect it showed the subject matter and its realism. That's the Rebellion we used to know and love.

Sniper Elite can be picked up for around the £15 mark – not super cheap, but still worth it.

Yakuza 3

NEED A HELPFUL GUIDE AROUND THE BUSY STREETS OF JAPAN? LOOKING TO EARN SOME TROPHIES WHILE YOU EXPLORE? THIS MINI-GUIDE DETAILS ALL THE ACTIVITIES AND HOW BEST TO EARN THE ACCOLADES FOR THEM...

Details

Publisher Sega **Developer** Amusement Vision **Price** £49.99 **Players** 1
Genre Action adventure **Age Rating** 18 **Website** www.sega.co.uk/yakuza3

GAMBLING

There are three games to play in the gambling halls: cee-lo, koi-koi and oichu-kabu. The first two are hard to win with anything other than luck, so oichu-kabu will earn you the most tags. This plays most like blackjack, except the number closest to nine wins.

You need to try to beat the banker until it's your turn to deal. Here you play as normal, but try to stick on as high a number as possible – six to nine is more than likely to beat most players and, since the banker claims any lost bets, you can quite easily rack up 300-400 tags that round. Keep playing this until you've earned 10,000.

CASINO

These Western games are more recognisable. Roulette is won purely through chance, and it's unlikely that you'll win much, while blackjack is the easiest to win, but the odds are low so your income won't be massive.

Poker is the most lucrative for chips. If it's unlikely that you'll earn a set, even as low as a single pair, then just fold and save your chips until the next round. When you've got a decent hand (a two pair or better) then keep raising the stakes to fill the pot and increase your income should you win. You'll earn 400-500 chips a game, so play until the 10,000 total is earned.



FINE DINING

Across the game there are a number of restaurants and eateries in the city areas. Keep track of where you've visited using the 'Completion Rate' menu from the pause screen. You need to order the most expensive item from each menu and, where there are multiple items sharing the highest price, you'll need to order them all.

BOWLING

Kamuro-cho contains the game's bowling alley, though this isn't unlocked until your second visit. A trick to easily hitting a strike is to move the start position as far to the left as possible. Next, try to angle the direction so it points as close to the centre as you can get it. Get as high a power rating as possible then add a slight spin to the ball – left if you're aiming to the right of the centre pin and vice versa. After some practice, you can easily get strikes one after another.



BASEBALL

In the batting cage, select the Hard Mode. Aim the crosshairs of the reticule along one of the horizontal or vertical lines that separate two panels, then wait for the throw. Some may swing in, but as long as you hit the ball at the right time and the crosshair is lined up perfectly, then you will easily hit two panels at once.



ARCADE

Boxcelios: This shooter gives you an allotted amount of time to play, with your task being to shoot down spaceships. You have two seconds at

the start of each round to destroy the ship, after which your total time will begin counting down. Look out for the glowing section, since hitting this will automatically destroy the spaceship. You'll need to get to about round 30 to be within a chance of getting on the high-score board.

UFO Catcher: These are just like the prize cranes you would fail miserably against as a child. You can collect different prizes from the different machines around Japan, and if you manage to collect ten you'll be in with a chance of unlocking a Trophy. Try to align the crane to a prize that is easily grabbable, preferably using the claws to completely cover the object and successfully claim it for yourself.



FISHING

This mini-game can only be played on the beach near Sunshine Orphanage. You will need some decent bait to attract fish from the furthest reaches (or if you're hoping to catch a tuna). To successfully catch a fish, push the left stick in the direction that the fish is travelling to lower the tension meter, then press R1 to reel in. Keep matching the direction and you'll soon bag yourself a fish of some sorts.

GOLF

On the course, direct the arrow as close to the hole as you can. Select the club that closest matches the distance to the hole. When striking the ball, press X as close to the top as you can, then again in the marker towards the bottom. To reach a distance greater than 350 yards, select the highest club and hit it with as smooth an action as you can – this doesn't need to be close to the hole, just reach the total distance.



POOL

This can be played with a competitor or alone. If you're playing for the 'Break Ace' Trophy, then you'll need to pot the nine ball on the break. This'll take a lot of practice with precise shots, so you might want to save your game in case you spend all your money. Position the ball on the left-hand side of the table, close to the cushion but not directly touching

it. Aim to hit the first ball at an angle so that the force will clear the rack and allow the cue ball to continue onwards and, eventually, it should knock the nine into a pocket.

IF7

There is no Trophy for actually playing this game, but there is a high possibility you'll miss this as it's quite hidden away. Locate a scientist in a backstreet near the Champion District, pay his ¥100,000 and fend off the thugs that appear. His machine replays past boss battles, though, they are considerably more difficult. Beat these, however, and you'll unlock new abilities to use in a fight.



KARAOKE

Probably the most bizarre sight in the game is watching the beefed-up yakuza sing along to cheesy J-Pop. If you want an easy Trophy for this then all you need to do is sing along to the six songs by pressing the corresponding buttons. You don't even need to do particularly well in each of them to have the Trophy unlock.



DARTS

If you play alone you'll be able to practise your throws without waiting for your rival to finish his turn. Position the circle of the dart over the bullseye, then slowly pull back on the right stick to angle your throw. Make sure you don't let the hand curve too much before pushing sharply up on the stick to throw the dart – you want a gentle throw to hit the target.



HOW TO GET... 7 BRONZE AND 2 SILVER TROPHIES IN JUST SIX HOURS!

You'll be spending most of your time with Yakuza 3 enjoying the leisure activities that Japan can offer and, since you'll naturally want those shiny Trophies, we're here to help...

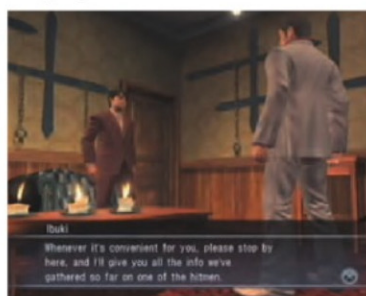
HEAT ACTION PRO BRONZE

This one will be easy to achieve, providing you regularly remember to finish a fight with a Heat action. It doesn't matter which action it is, so use normal attacks on most of the enemies to build your Heat bar then, when only one enemy remains, unleash the action of your choice to finish them off.



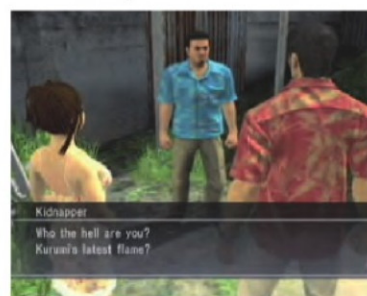
BOUNTY HUNTER BRONZE

When you return to Kamuro-cho the second time, you will meet up with a character who is running a rehabilitation centre for ex-yakuzas. This character will provide you with different hitmen you're required to capture. There are 20 to complete in total, 15 in Kamuro-cho and five in Ryukyu.



SUBSTORY DABBLER BRONZE

There are 113 substories to find and complete throughout the game. Most will be initiated when speaking to certain NPCs on the street, however, others will begin by themselves. Some even continue on from a previous one, so make sure you find and complete as many as you can to earn the Trophies related to them.



TINKERER BRONZE

You'll be given access to this quite early on in the game, but you may well forget about its existence. Find the weapon modder either in Ryukyu or Kamuro-cho and purchase one of the design books – this will enable you to find out what 'ingredients' are needed that can then be purchased from local stores.



BLOGGING DEBUT BRONZE

Before heading to the airport go back to Kamuro-cho and you'll meet a character called Mack. This NPC will send you messages informing you of where you can find new 'revelations' that unlock new abilities. Use first-person mode to locate these events, then follow the on-screen commands to unlock this Trophy.



DESTROYER BRONZE

In most fights you'll find a lot of objects scattered around – anything from bicycles to signs. Pick these up and use them against your foes until they break and are no longer useable. The number in the top-left corner represents how many strikes it'll take before it's smashed, so less hard-wearing objects are better.



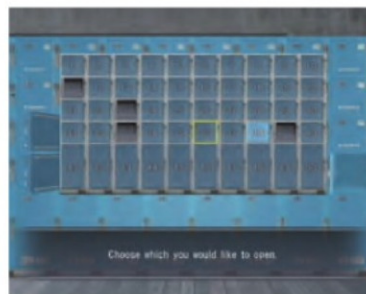
HUMAN WATCHER BRONZE

This is achieved by initiating ten fights while using the first-person view. Keep an eye out for pedestrians that are standing still in the street as these characters are the ones who are already looking for a fight, so target them in first-person mode and they'll come running over to you. Do this ten times and the 'Human Watcher' Trophy will be yours.



KEY COLLECTOR SILVER

When shining objects begin to appear in random locations throughout the game, you can stop to collect these. They can be in any location, mostly on the floor in the street, but often you'll need to use the first-person view to spot them. Keep collecting these keys until the top row of lockers in Ryukyu and Kamuro-cho are all unlocked.



LEGENDARY CHAMPION SILVER

After defeating Majima a second time in the coliseum, the event will be reopened for you to take part in. All you need to do for this Trophy is beat all of the tournaments – both individual and tag team. These are no different to most normal fights, so keep dodging their attacks then unload your combos on them to knock them down.



Including: Saints Row 2, Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction, God Of War Collection /// Cheats /// J'accuse!

THE SECRET VAULT

A post-ironic look at the world of PlayStation cheats and Easter eggs

Saints Row 2

Undead homie



Step 1: Following the death of Carlos pull out your mobile and give the following number a call: 555-5966.



Step 2: If it's worked then someone will answer your call and groan "braiiiiinnns." That there would be zombie Carlos.



Step 3: The new undead Carlos is now available on your Homies list and you can call for his support at any time you like.

Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction

Teddy tracking



Step 1: Get your shredder claws ready as you approach the Iris Supercomputer on Kreeli Comet. We'll explain in a moment.



Step 2: Jump and claw at the wall just to the side of the entrance so that you can get up on the roof of the building.



Step 3: Head back across the roof to find a pillar and you should see a mysteriously placed teddy bear waiting for you.

God Of War Collection

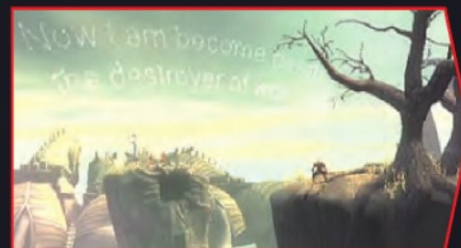
More sky messages



Step 1: In *God Of War II*, in the Hall of Atropos, after beating Perseus, head down to the upper level and cross the narrow bridge.



Step 2: Look for the floor jutting out from the wall and trigger it, then trigger another marker on the opposite side after a quick fight.



Step 3: On the balcony you will find a third trigger and the last is past the grapple points among the tree roots. Then a message will appear.

LATEST CHEATS

GTA IV: Episodes From Liberty City

PS3

As ever simply pull up your mobile phone and enter the following phone numbers for all sorts of handy toys and effects. Remember that all the codes from the original game will also still work. Once entered they will be stored on your phone for future use.

The Lost And Damned

Armour 362-555-0100
 Health, armour & ammo 482-555-0100
 Weapons tier #1 486-555-0150
 Weapons tier #2 486-555-0100
 Weapons tier #3 485-555-0100
 Lower wanted level 267-555-0100
 Raise wanted level 267-555-0150
 Spawn Innovation bike 245-555-0100



Spawn Hexer bike 245-555-0150
 Spawn Double T bike 245-555-0125
 Spawn Hakuchou bike 245-555-0199
 Spawn Slamvan 826-555-0100
 Spawn Burrito 826-555-0150

The Ballad Of Gay Tony

Armour 362-555-0100
 Health, armour & ammo 482-555-0100
 Weapons tier #1 486-555-0150
 Weapons tier #2 486-555-0100
 Weapons tier #3 485-555-0100
 Change weather 468-555-0100
 Super punch 276-555-2666
 Explosive sniper shots 486-555-2526
 Spawn Floater boat 938-555-0150

Spawn Akuma bike 625-555-0200
 Spawn Vader bike 625-555-3273
 Spawn APC 272-555-8265
 Spawn Buzzard helicopter 359-555-2899
 Spawn Bullet GT 227-555-9666
 Spawn parachute 359-555-7272
 Spawn Annihilator 359-555-0100
 Spawn Jetmax 938-555-0100
 Spawn NRG-900 625-555-0100
 Spawn Sanchez 625-555-0150
 Spawn FBI Buffalo 227-555-0100
 Spawn Comet 227-555-0175
 Spawn Turismo 272-555-0147
 Spawn Cognoscenti 227-555-0142
 Spawn Super GT 227-555-0168

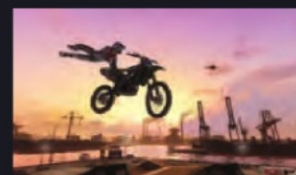
MX Vs ATV: Reflex

PS3

Go to the 'Enter Code' screen to enter in the following cheats and

get yourself some of the flashier content the game has to offer from the start.

Unlock all ATVs COUCHES
 Unlock all MX vehicles BRAPBRAP
 Unlock all gear GEAREDUP
 Unlock all boots KICKS
 Unlock all goggles WINDOWS
 Unlock all helmets SKULLCAP
 Unlock all locations WHERE TO
 Unlock all AI characters ALLAI



Bayonetta

PS3

Fancy getting the Climax Bracelets a bit ahead of time? Save up 5 million Halos while playing the game and head to the Plaza. On the right-hand side you should see the phone booth and then you just have to enter the following:



↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ←
 → ← → R2

Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing

PS3

Turbo starts are an important part of any karting game and we have the inside scoop on how to pull them off in *Sonic & Sega Racing*. You simply need to hit and hold accelerate just as the number '3' starts to fade from the screen at the start line. Do this three times in a row on three different races and you'll get the Wheels Of Fire Trophy.



An alternative opinion about great PlayStation games that doesn't ever reflect the views of Play magazine

それはどのようによかったか。

by John Sheppard

J'accuse!

HEAVY RAIN

[SONY, PS3, 2010]

Beware spoilers. Although technically you can't spoil something that's already lame

I've waited so long for this moment. This J'accuse has been three years in the making. So much bile has built up in that time that there's no way I'm going to have room for it all on just one page, but I guess I'll just try to spew up the best bits.

There are so many little things that are wrong with *Heavy Rain* that it's hard not to just list them. Let's tackle

How was I supposed to know that meant 'stop showering and get dressed'?

the fundamentals instead. Let's talk about how it doesn't bloody work.

Your actions affect what scenes you do and do not play, so you get to

experience your own version of the story, which is great if your version of the story happens to hang together properly, but not so great in the likely event that it doesn't. In my version of the story, Madison gets the name John Sheppard (no relation) from Paco Mendez then goes to Ethan, tells him she can prove he's not the Origami Killer then tries to kiss him, but he's a bit preoccupied with other matters to take part in a totally superfluous sex scene, and so rejects her advances.

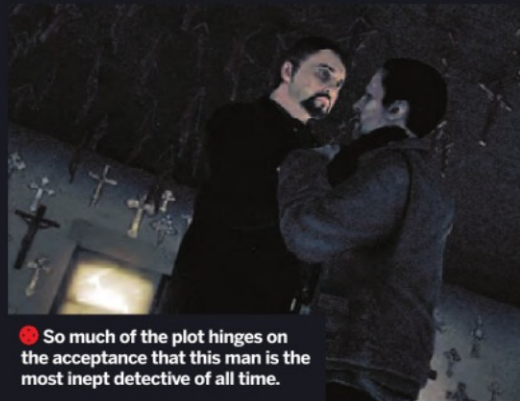
She leaves and the echoic voice in her head (which represents her thoughts, in case that idea was too innovative for you) decides to go home, which

Why isn't there an option that says 'PLAYSTATION'? No wonder the kid looks like he wants to die.



she does, ignoring the police on her way out. The police catch Ethan, then Scott Shelby comes home, gets hit on the head by Kramer's heavy and wakes up in a car at the bottom of a river. He escapes, goes to Kramer's house, where Kramer tells him about Ann Sheppard. The next scene starts with Madison visiting Ann in hospital. Having completed the game since, I now know why Scott isn't the one visiting Ann, but I didn't at the time and I still don't know why Madison is. I thought the game had bugged out on me, but it's turned out to be a simple case of very clumsy storytelling.

What really bugs me is that if you mention stuff like this to fans of the game, they always say that I missed certain scenes that give more details as if that's my fault. For *Heavy Rain* to work, each version of the story needs continuity as good as any and every other version, so that it flows properly and makes sense without forcing you



So much of the plot hinges on the acceptance that this man is the most inept detective of all time.

to assume and accept things that haven't been explained. But this isn't the case, so it doesn't work.

Worse still, I hate the way the button prompts tell you what to do, but not what the character will do when you do it. As soon as Madison gets in the shower a down arrow appears. How was I supposed to know that meant 'stop showering and get dressed'? HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW? DAMNIT!

It's like a scene from an *Austin Powers* movie, only people tut when you laugh at this.



Quiz answers

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1) Guy | 8) He's a robot! | 16) 2005 |
| 2) Guile | 9) Four | 17) Four |
| 3) Blanka | 10) Deadwood, natch | 18) Firmware. Ruddy firmware |
| 4) T-Hawk | 11) <i>The Getaway</i> | 19) UMDs |
| 5) The Man With No Name | 12) Sewage (of the poo-based variety) | 20) One. He takes care of his things |
| 6) John Wayne | 13) Roman | |
| 7) Al Swearengen | 14) New York | |
| | 15) <i>Driver</i> | |

Results:

Add up your correct answers from the Play Quiz then refer to this chart to determine what cowboy firearm you are:

- 0) Remington 1866 Derringer
 1-5) Starr 1858 Army
 6-10) Winchester 1892
 11-15) Colt 1851 Navy
 16-20) Rossi Overland double-barrelled shotgun

PLAYLIST

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

PLAYLIST TOP FIVE GAMING CRIMINALS

top five KEITH HENNESSEY

- 1 Niko Bellic (*GTA IV*)
- 2 Agent 47 (*Hitman* series)
- 3 Snake (*The Simpsons* Game)
- 4 Machine Gun Willy (*Double Dragon*)
- 5 M Bison (*Street Fighter* series)

top five GAVIN MACKENZIE

- 1 Sweet Tooth (*Twisted Metal: Black*)
- 2 Ricardo Diaz (*GTA: Vice City*)
- 3 Marlon King (*FIFA 10*)
- 4 The Devil (*Dante's Inferno*)
- 5 Snake Jailbird (*The Simpsons Road Rage*)

top five JON GORDON

- 1 Nathaniel Williams (*Heavy Rain*)
- 2 The Joker (*Batman: AA*)
- 3 Garrett (*Thief*)
- 4 Packie McReary (*GTA IV*)
- 5 Johnny Gat (*Saints Row 2*)

top five IAN DRANSFIELD

- 1 Sweet Tooth (*Twisted Metal* series)
- 2 Agent 47 (*Hitman* series)
- 3 Kazuma Kiryu (*Yakuza* series)
- 4 Gray Fox (*Elder Scrolls: Oblivion*)
- 5 Niko Bellic (*GTA IV*)

top five ALI INNES

- 1 Bagger (*Blogger* on C64)
- 2 Michael Scofield (*Prison Break*)
- 3 Shredder (*TMNT*)
- 4 Don Vito Corleone (*The Godfather*)
- 5 Dominic Greene (*Quantum Of Solace*)

top five DAN PEEL

- 1 Niko Bellic (*GTA IV*)
- 2 Carl 'CJ' Johnson (*GTA III: San Andreas*)
- 3 The Origami Killer (*Heavy Rain*)
- 4 Belger (*Final Fight*)
- 5 Syndicate Agents (*Syndicate* series)

PS3 LISTING

game	issue	score
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.		
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The most over-the-top, inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years.		
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
This FPS-adventure hybrid has been admirably translated to the PS3. The most atmospheric game of our time.		
BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Damnation	181	38%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Dead Space	172	87%
Demon's Souls	182	91%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%

game	issue	score
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
The best football game made marginally better. The crown held by PES seems like so long ago now.		
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	23%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
God Of War III	190	88%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
If you haven't already bought it, then stop reading this box, put your shoes on and go out and get it! The best game ever? Probably.		
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
World Tour just about manages to trump rival Rock Band with its entertaining music-creation tools, and quality peripherals.		
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
Iron Man	166	58%

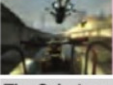
game	issue	score
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever.		
Lair	158	52%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
Create, share and play. Sackboy heads up Media Molecule's highly customisable and adorable platformer.		
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	175	52%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
MAG	189	68%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Not the final Metal Gear Solid game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.		
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
With its balls strapped firmly to the wall, Pacific Rift amplifies the drama of the original to create the PS3's best racing title.		
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NHL 2K7	151	80%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

God Of War III PS3	88%	Way Of The Samurai 3 PS3	16%
Final Fantasy XIII PS3	85%	SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3 PSP	71%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2 PS3	93%	Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days PSP	87%
Just Cause 2 PS3	87%	Army Of Two: The 40th Day PSP	45%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition PS3	86%	Puzzle Chronicles PSP	61%
MotoGP 09/10 PS3	77%	Silent Hill: Shattered Memories PSP	52%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing PS3	78%	Final Fantasy VIII PSN	90%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger PS3	85%	Diner Dash PSN	66%
White Knight Chronicles PS3	55%	Hustle Kings PSN	87%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International PS3	63%	Polar Panic PSN	65%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge PS3	55%	Frogger Returns PSN	35%

game	issue	score
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	171	80%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
 With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, <i>Resistance 2</i> is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
 With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saw	186	52%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
Sega Rally	158	92%
 Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for <i>Colin McRae</i>. Not much in it, really.		
Sega Superstars Tennis	165	68%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	169	94%
 Even the gimmicky appearance of Darth Vader can't spoil <i>Soul Calibur IV</i>. Another wonderful addition to the franchise.		
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%

game	issue	score
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
 The best beat-'em-up on the PS3, probably the best beat-'em-up ever, and maybe even the best game ever. Our poor little thumbs.		
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Tekken 6	184	94%
 There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, nothing, stops <i>Tekken 6</i> from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
 It's a gorgeous game that'll make Beatles fans feel like they're being swaddled in a veil of pure joy. A breathtaking product.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
 This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, <i>Oblivion</i> is an awesome game.		
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The Orange Box	161	93%
 Five brilliant games for the price of one, what on Earth could be better than that? Nothing, that's what. <i>Absolutely nothing</i>.		
The Saboteur	187	67%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X	177	75%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
 <i>Among Thieves</i> has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.		
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
 Pick-up-and-play gameplay strikes another blow, proving that the PS3 is currently at its best when it keeps it simple.		
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhawk	157	84%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%

game	issue	score
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2010	185	77%
Yakuza 3*	178	82%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%

PS STORE LISTING

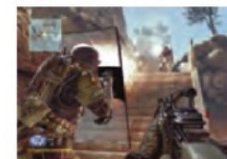


1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
 We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i>. Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3: Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
 This is yet another beautiful, cute and high-class puzzler on the PSN that works perfectly and is a joy to play.		
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%
 With the most cinematic car chases ever seen in a game, <i>Driver</i> made a huge impact in 1998. Despite rosy graphics, it's still a playable title.		
Droplitz	184	91%
echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	170	45%
Everybody's Golf 2	62	83%
Fade To Black	09	44%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%

*denotes import review

PS3 top fives

top five FPS



- 1 Modern Warfare 2
- 2 The Orange Box
- 3 Killzone 2
- 4 Unreal Tournament III
- 5 Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

top five RACING



- 1 MotorStorm: Pacific Rift
- 2 Sega Rally
- 3 Colin McRae: DIRT
- 4 Colin McRae: DIRT 2
- 5 Need For Speed ProStreet

top five SPORTS



- 1 Virtua Tennis 3
- 2 FIFA 10
- 3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2007
- 4 Fight Night Round 3
- 5 Everybody's Golf World Tour

top five ADVENTURE



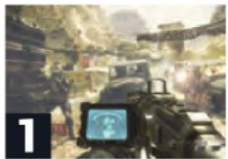
- 1 Grand Theft Auto IV
- 2 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
- 3 Assassin's Creed II
- 4 God Of War III
- 5 Metal Gear Solid 4

top five SHOOT-'EM-UP



- 1 The Club
- 2 GRAW 2
- 3 Super Stardust HD
- 4 Everyday Shooter
- 5 Kane & Lynch: Dead Men

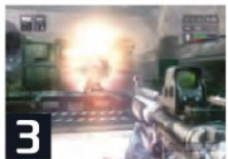
TOP TEN NETWORK GAMES



1 Modern Warfare 2



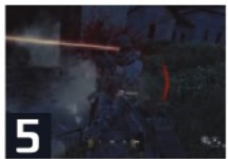
2 LittleBigPlanet



3 Killzone 2



4 Unreal Tournament III



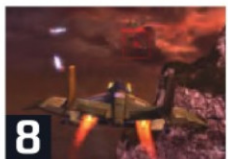
5 Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare



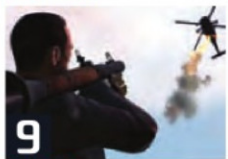
6 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves



7 MotorStorm: Pacific Rift



8 Warhawk



9 GTA IV



10 Street Fighter IV

game	issue	score
Final Fantasy VII Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.	181	96%
Final Fantasy VIII A truly engaging RPG – if you've never experienced the game before then make sure this is the next thing you download.	190	90%
Flock!	179	70%
fiOw	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
G-Police	27	84%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperbolloid HD	188	70%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Kula World	172	71%
Lemmings	151	79%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Probably the best puzzle game on the PSN, which is saying something because there's loads of competition.		
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Motorhead	173	60%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
So addictive it should come with some sort of government warning. Terrific value for money and a superb little puzzle game.		
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
The second game in the PixelJunk series is great fun and brilliantly addictive. Buy it and play it constantly for hours on end!		
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
Q-Games delivers excellence on the PSN once again with its PixelJunk series, this time in the form of a classic shoot-'em-up.		
Piyotama	162	62%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%

game	issue	score
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Gabe Logan's gritty PSone adventure has shadowed all that came after. As always, the original really is best.		
Snakeball	176	92%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Snake meets Pac-Man meets GoogleMaps. The Last Guy is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.		
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
WipeOut	01	89%
WipeOut HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Worms	179	91%
Zuma	182	78%

PSP mini LISTING

Alien Havoc	186	68%
Bloons	186	65%
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	186	45%
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	186	57%
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero of Sparta	186	57%
Kahoots	186	88%
Pinball Fantasies	186	90%
It's like having an Amiga on your PSP, meaning it's brilliant even without the fact that the game is great.		
Puzzle Scape	186	75%
Tetris	186	93%
How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.		
Vempire	186	67%

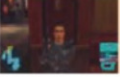
PSP LISTING



game	issue	score
300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy	134	44%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bombberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Despite being more of a 'best of' than a completely new game, Legends is the best racing game on the PSP.		
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core – Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game.		
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
F1 2009	187	66%
F1 Grand Prix	134	81%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld	139	82%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Gripshift	136	81%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
Bar some combat control issues, GTA: Chinatown Wars has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game.		

game	issue	score
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
 Successfully taking the GTA formula and putting it on one UMD of pure goodness, this is one of the PSP's best games.		
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
 Improving on its predecessor in every way, the only way <i>Vice City Stories</i> could be topped is if <i>San Andreas</i> comes to the PSP.		
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
 Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup.		
LocoRoco	143	94%
 We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without.		
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
Medieval Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
 We're not too clued up on retro games, but we do know our <i>Metal Slug</i> and the <i>Anthology</i> proves to be a great compilation.		
Metal Gear Ac'd 2	138	92%
 More excellent card-based espionage starring everyone's favourite mullet-head, with funky new cel-shaded graphics.		
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
 A proper <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> game on a portable machine. It was never likely to disappoint, and it didn't. A great title.		
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	134	57%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%

game	issue	score
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends: Akatsuki Rising	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
Need For Speed Most Wanted	136	73%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
 The arcade classic comes to PSP and is just as good as it's ever been. The perfect game to play on a rainy Sunday afternoon.		
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCroS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ - Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
 Arguably the best launch game on the PSP, <i>Ridge Racer</i> still stands up as one of the finest racing games for the system.		
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
 <i>Unplugged</i> comes highly recommended. It's superb - there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld.		
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
 New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights themselves are as hectic and solid as ever. A portable delight.		
Spider-Man 3	162	32%

game	issue	score
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
 In the absence of a 'real' <i>Metal Gear</i> game, it's left to Gabe Logan to carry the stealthy torch, and he does a fine job of it too.		
Syphon Filter: Logan's Shadow	161	84%
Tales Of Eternia	138	85%
Tales Of The World	158	56%
Taito Legends	145	64%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
 <i>Tekken: Dark Resurrection</i> is instantly playable and provides the PSP's first great brawler.		
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	153	64%
The Godfather Mob Wars	136	66%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	137	71%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
WipeOut Pulse	159	86%
WipeOut Pure	138	91%
 Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld <i>WipeOut</i> game could be, <i>Pure</i> is an essential PSP purchase.		
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%

psp top fives

top five RACING



- 1 Burnout Legends
- 2 Gran Turismo
- 3 Ridge Racer
- 4 WipeOut Pure
- 5 Sega Rally

top five SHOOT-'EM-UPS



- 1 Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops
- 2 Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror
- 3 Pursuit Force
- 4 Miami Vice
- 5 Rainbow Six Vegas

top five SPORTS



- 1 Virtua Tennis 3
- 2 Everybody's Golf 2
- 3 FIFA 10
- 4 Football Manager Handheld
- 5 WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010

top five RPG



- 1 Disgaea: Afternoon of Darkness
- 2 Crisis Core - Final Fantasy VII
- 3 Tales Of Eternia
- 4 Breath Of Fire 3
- 5 Valkyrie Profile

top five PLATFORM



- 1 LocoRoco
- 2 Metal Slug Anthology
- 3 LittleBigPlanet
- 4 Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins
- 5 Me And My Katamari

Play Book Club

Resistance

Author: Mike Costa • RRP: £19.99

War has been fought in the game stores and now it looks set to continue on the book shelves as, following the release of a graphic novel based on *Gears Of War*, Titan Books has hit back with a new book based on PS3 sci-fi shooter *Resistance*. Written as a follow-up to *Resistance 2*, this first volume sees Nathan Hale lead the charge against the Chimera as they start their invasion of America and try to get their freaky alien mitts on an atomic bomb.



Dragon Age: The Calling/ The Stolen Throne

Author: David Gaider • RRP: £6.99

If you've played *Dragon Age* but have exhausted all the stories then fear not as you can carry on the adventuring with a new series of books. Written by the lead writer and developer of the game, David Gaider, these serve as prequels to *Origins*. As well as *Dragon Age*, Gaider has worked on the likes of *Baldur's Gate* and *Neverwinter Nights* so you're guaranteed some compelling storytelling. Perfect for your breaks from the game.



*denotes import review



Who would have thought that an old codger could have such an amazing adventure?



DETAILS

Price
£19.99
Sound
DTS-HD Master
Audio 5.1
Director
Pete Docter, Bob
Peterson
Starring
Edward Asner,
Christopher
Plummer, Bob
Peterson

Up

Up, up and away with Disney's new Blu-ray

CGI-animated films always look sensational on Blu-ray, but you'll still be gob-smacked by just how beautiful Pixar's new film looks on Sony's HD format. Vibrant and filled with masses of details, it's a spectacular transfer that once again proves that Pixar rarely has an equal when it comes to CGI animation. Despite *Up's* glorious visuals and a staggering array of extras that once again prove how far

Despite *Up's* glorious visuals and a staggering array of extras, the story itself is nowhere near as magical

Disney is ahead of the competition, the story itself is nowhere near as magical.

Up starts with a montage that not only sets up why hero Carl Fredrickson is so grumpy but shows how adept Pixar is at manipulating the heart strings. It's an admittedly brave opening for a kid's film, dealing with death and lost hopes and expectations, but the interesting setup quickly runs out of steam.

Desperate to fulfil the dreams he shared with his wife, Carl attaches hundreds of balloons to his house and sets off to South America in order to find the legendary Paradise Falls. He's joined by a young wilderness explorer named Russell and they set off on their fantastic journey – except their actual journey isn't that fantastic.

Despite the addition of a giant exotic bird named Kevin and Dug the talking dog, *Up* is surprisingly dull, more so when you consider the brilliance of previous Pixar films. There's an underlying feeling that Pixar is more interested in pulling at your heart strings than giving you a genuinely heart-warming story, and while moments of *Up* do reach the standards we usually expect, they come few and far between.

The concept of old people – Carl's nemesis is a crazed explorer even older than he is – battling each other is quite funny initially, but it's a joke that's stretched far too thin. The sad truth of the matter is that *Up* simply feels



Yes, *Up* looks absolutely beautiful, but the threadbare plot and lack of direction really harms it.

far too by the numbers, like it was designed by a committee, rather than a group of people who wanted to create a story that was just as strong as their past films. Very little actually happens in *Up* and yet it still manages to outdo many other animated efforts; an achievement in itself.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

It lacks the smarts and imagination of past Pixar films, but there is enough in *Up* to justify a purchase. As long as you're not expecting quality like *Toy Story* and *WALL•E* you'll be fine.

RATING: ★★★★★

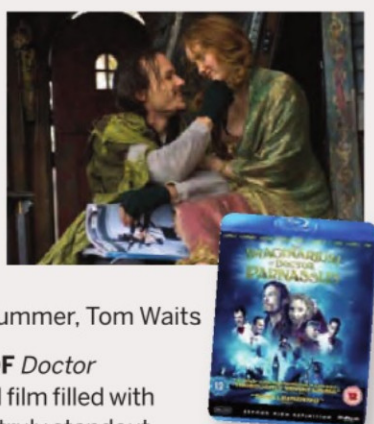
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hardware
reviews

Blu-ray Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

The Imaginarium Of Doctor Parnassus

PRICE: £24.99
SOUND: DTS-HD 5.1
DIRECTOR: Terry Gilliam
STARRING: Heath Ledger, Christopher Plummer, Tom Waits



THE IMAGINARIUM OF *Doctor Parnassus* is an oddball film filled with surprising warmth and truly standout performances from its eclectic cast. Terry Gilliam's surreal world looks stunning in HD and, while the last act unravels somewhat, this is easily his most imaginative film since *The Fisher King*. A charming tale that's enhanced magnificently by its Blu-ray presentation. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

Poseidon

PRICE: £17.99
SOUND: DTS-HD 5.1
DIRECTOR: Wolfgang Petersen
STARRING: Kurt Russell, Josh Lucas, Richard Dreyfuss



YES, VIRTUALLY EVERY scene has been taken from the big book of movie disaster clichés, but Wolfgang Petersen's remake of *The Poseidon Adventure* still manages to entertain. Tight and lean – it's a little under 100 minutes in length – *Poseidon* proves to be an entertaining popcorn movie that never outstays its welcome and proves to be a tense, entertaining adventure. The transfer feels a little soft, but the excellent audio track more than makes up for it. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

Fantastic Mr. Fox

PRICE: £28.99
SOUND: DTS-HD 5.1
DIRECTOR: Wes Anderson
STARRING: George Clooney, Meryl Streep, Bill Murray



CRUELLY SNUBBED

AT the Baftas in favour of *Up*, Wes Anderson's retelling of Roald Dahl's spiky children's book succeeds on many levels. It's well acted, boasts some stunning animation and gives both adults and kids plenty to sink their teeth into. Genuinely funny, this amazing transfer allows you to appreciate all of the animator's hard work and proves that you don't need state-of-the-art CGI to create truly entertaining animated films. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

Day Of The Dead

PRICE: £24.99
SOUND: DTS-HD 5.1
DIRECTOR: George A Romero
STARRING: Joseph Pilato, Terrence Alexander



THE THIRD PART of Romero's zombie trilogy hits Blu-ray and quite frankly it's never looked better. Boasting an excellent picture – if slightly subdued sound – this new BD edition has plenty of decent extras that justify its 25th anniversary status. While it's not quite on a par with the excellent original, *Day Of The Dead* remains a gory addition to the franchise that's laced with a deadly sense of humour and some genuinely terrifying moments. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

Charts

UK Top 5

- 1** **Michael Jackson: This Is It**
If you're looking for deep insight, you'll be very disappointed.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 2** **The Hurt Locker**
An excellent film that features killer performances and masterful direction. It looks amazing as well.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 3** **Up**
While an enjoyable jaunt, it's just not a patch on some of Pixar's earlier films. Disappointing.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 4** **Jennifer's Body**
A solid performance from Megan Fox gives bite to this smart twist on teen dramas.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 5** **Gamer**
Gerard Butler stars as an online participant in an online videogame. As dumb as it sounds.
RATING: ★★★★★

US Top 5

- 1** **Law Abiding Citizen**
It would seem that Americans love scowling and bad plots, as Gerard Butler's flick hits the top spot.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 2** **Up**
Up continues to do well on both sides of the pond. Expect *Toy Story 3* to be just as successful.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 3** **Justice League: Crisis On Two Earths**
The latest cartoon of DC superheroes looks stunning in HD.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 4** **Star Trek**
It's been out for ages now but JJ Abrams' hip reboot is still doing big business on Blu-ray.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 5** **Night At The Museum: Battle Of The Smithsonian**
More fluff from Ben Stiller in this disappointing sequel on Blu-ray.
RATING: ★★★★★

Top 5 Sci-Fi

- 1** **X-Men Origins: Wolverine**
Have the X-Men had their day? Possibly, if this is anything to go by.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 2** **District 9**
Wonderfully inventive action film that sports stunning effects but also tickles the old grey matter.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 3** **9**
A good voice cast can't breathe life into this truly dull animated film by Shane Acker.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 4** **The Matrix Trilogy**
Part three is an abomination, but the original is still an amazing piece of sci-fi.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 5** **Watchmen – Director's Cut**
An already overlong film gets an even lengthier director's cut.
RATING: ★★★★★

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Samsung BD-P1580

Price: £99.99
Profile: 2.0

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED in a standalone Blu-ray player, but don't have money to burn then you may want to check out Samsung's BD-P1580. While it lacks many of the features you'll find in the latest high-end players, it still manages to churn out an impressive picture, has a DTS-HD encoder and benefits from extremely quick loading times. It also features USB support, has 256MB of built-in memory and has a surprisingly compact size. It may be cheap but it's definitely cheerful. Highly recommended. **★★★★★**



Sony BDV-IT 1000 Home Cinema System

Price: £1,549
Profile: 2.0

IT IS INCREDIBLY expensive but you're getting a hell of a lot for your cash. In addition to a sleek and sexy Blu-ray player this bundle includes extremely stylish Wi-Fi speakers and a powerful amp. Everything about this amazing package screams quality and while you'll certainly need to have very deep pockets, the end product more than makes up for it. If you're looking at kitting out your entire home-cinema system then this is the perfect way to do it. **★★★★★**



Panasonic DMP-BD60EB-K

Price: £339.99
Profile: 2.0

THE DOWNSIDE TO importing Blu-rays is that some of them are often region locked to a specific country. Worry no longer, though, as the Panasonic DMP-BD60EB-K Blu-ray player will play Blu-rays from any region around the world. It also happens to boast excellent playback, fast loading times and supports plenty of high-definition audio channels. In short, if you're serious about getting your films first then this is an essential addition to your home. **★★★★★**

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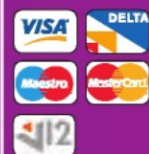
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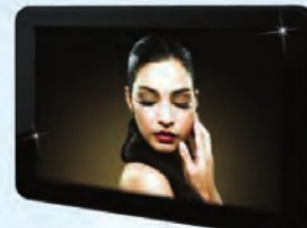
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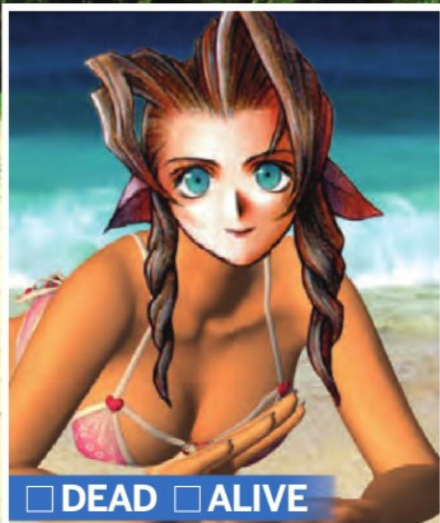
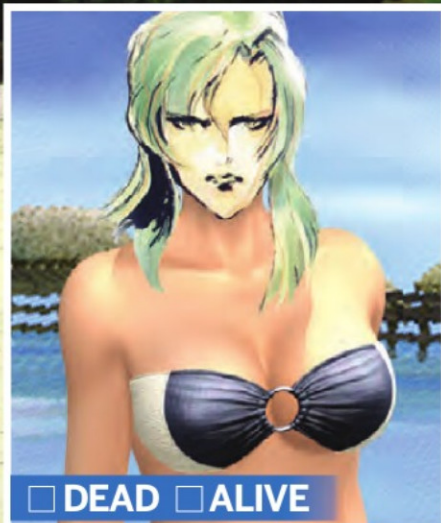
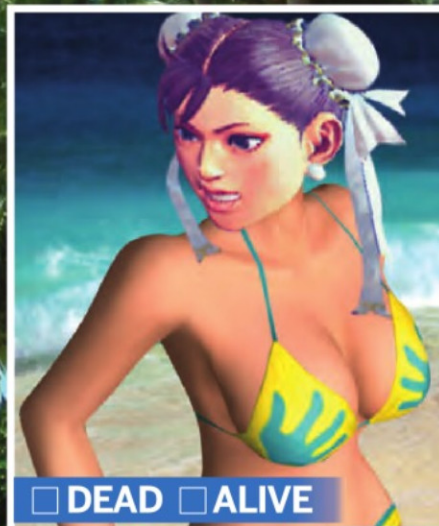
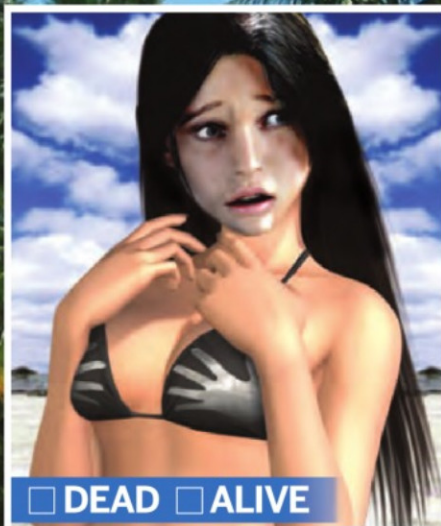
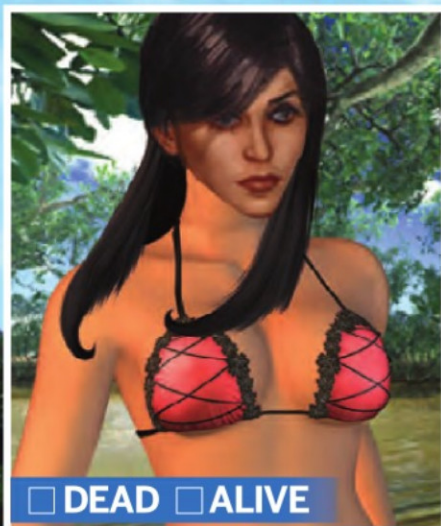
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DEAD OR ALIVE?

TO THE UNINITIATED, it might be difficult to understand exactly what kind of game *Dead Or Alive Paradise* actually is, which is why you need this demo to give you a taste of what it's all about. Namely, looking at girls in bikinis and determining whether or not they are dead or alive.

Each of the images below is of a well-known lady game character sunning herself in Paradise. The bad news is that since these pictures were taken, some of these lady game characters have died. So, cast your eyes over the eight images below and tick the relevant box depending on whether you think she is alive or dead these days. Then simply turn the page upside down and check your answers. If you got more than half right then clearly *Dead Or Alive Paradise* is the game for you.



ANSWERS: 1. Alive (Chloe - *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*) 2. Dead (Hel - *Viking: Battle for Asgard*) 3. Dead (Evelyn - *Killzone* series) 4. Alive (Chun-Li - *Street Fighter* series) 5. Dead (Sniper Wolf - *Metal Gear Solid*) 6. Dead (Aeris - *Final Fantasy VII*) 7. Dead (Jenniffer - *The Darkness*) 8. Alive (GLADOS - *Portal*)

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